Sports
EFU routs UE in UAAP opener

Metro / A20
82-year-old is oldest in Makati's computer classes for seniors

Lifestyle
Playroom for bonding

World / A10
World court: Israel barrier illegal

JOB Market
Wanted: Call center sales agents

Tanong ng Bayan / A6
Sino ang bagay sa DSWD, si Dinky e si Noli?
WIN A 21" TV! TEXT 2015

PHILIPPINE DAILY
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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Flaunting illegal wealth giving corrupt execs away

By Armand N. Nocum

IN THE past, this offense was corrupt, brutal, extreme.

Thursday, it is still... [illegible]

PAGE TWO / A-15

Justice on wheels: SC to field mobile courts

By Philip C. Tubeza

TO ACHIEVE the goal of the wheels of justice grinding exceedingly slow, the Supreme Court plans to field a fleet of "mobile courts" to distant provinces where there are no judges.

The Supreme Court said the mobile courts will [illegible]

JUSTICE / A-11

Angelo makes final appeal

Gov't firm on troops staying in Iraq as part of int'l commitment

By Jaime Laboy Jaen Elmer

"I BID you in withdraw the troops from Iraq."

This was the "final appeal" made by Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz yesterday hours before the lapse of a deadline set by Iraqi militants for beheading him if the Philippines did not withdraw its troops from Iraq.

Malacañang yesterday indicated it was standing firm on its decision to keep the Filipino troops in Iraq, at least, for the time being.

A senior Palace official said the government hoped it could secure an extension of the ultimatum set by De la Cruz's captors, if not their forgiveness outright.

If the Hilario's reckoning, the deadline set by the Iraqi hostage-takers was to lapse at 2 a.m. today (Manila time).

De la Cruz, 46, made his desperate plea in a videotape aired on Arabic television stations Al-Jazeera yesterday.

"To my colleagues in the Iraqi company and all Filipinos heading to Iraq, I advise you not to come to Iraq because of the many problems and because the Iraqi police cannot protect you, as happened with me," De la Cruz said, according to officials.

"To my family in the Philippines and President Arroyo, I beg you to withdraw the troops from Iraq," De la Cruz, wearing an orange jumpsuit, said to what Al-Jazeera called a final appeal, Reuters said in a report from Dubai.

The Associated Press, in its report from Baghdad, quoted De la Cruz as saying: "Please, Arroyo, withdraw your forces from Iraq."

Shortly before news of De la Cruz's appeal broke, Malacañang indicated it would remain steadfast in its decision to keep the 51-strong Philippine humanitarian contingent in Iraq for the meantime.

"Our humanitarian contingent is already scheduled to return on 20 August 2004," Ms. Arroyo's spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, said in a statement.

"Our future actions shall be guided by the United Nations Security Council decisions as embodied in Resolution 1546, which defines the role of the UN and its member states in the future of Iraq," Bunye added.

The hostage-takers, who identified themselves as members of the Islamic Army in Iraq, had given Arroyo's government 72 hours to withdraw the troops or face the consequences.

PRAYERS for Angelo de la Cruz echoed this 1st National Congress of the Clergy on Friday. The CBCP also held a special Mass for the Filipino hostage and his family at the Manila Church as Bishop Pilipinos around the country of all political colors, Christians and Muslims, have come together to pray for De la Cruz... [illegible]

Lowly truck driver unites a divided nation

A LOWLY truck driver has achieved what the country's leaders, politicians and big businessmen could not—mold a deeply divided nation together, if only, fleetingly.

"Symbolize, it seemed, there were no Christians and no Muslims in the country.

Crossing political, religious and [illegible] divides there were, all he respect the heroism with a common prayer—that 46-year-old truck driver Angelo de la Cruz of Pampanga survive his ordeal in the hands of his kidnappers.

Even communist rebels urged Filipinos to join prayer vigils and rallies for De la Cruz's life.

And some Robin Hoods offered to take the place of De la Cruz's as hostage.

Through it all, Malacañang officials and they were spreckles.

In the hours leaked away toward the 72-hour deadline set by Iraqi militants for beheading De la Cruz, Malacañang launched desperate efforts to save his life.

The ultimatum was to expire at 2 a.m. today (Manila time), unless the government yielded to the hostage-takers' demand for the pullout of its Iraq humanitarian force of 51 Filipinos in war in Iraq. (The humor story.)

Refusing to yield, the Arroyo administration stepped in short four Muslim countries to help appeal to the hostage-takers to spare De la Cruz's life.

Hours ahead of the Sunday morning ultimatum deadline, in a video shown on various satellite-based [illegible] a Filipino Muslim cleric, surrounded by the family of the captive, broadcast an

SPREES / A-9

MEA CULPA

SWS admits it made errors in exit poll

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE PRESIDENT of the Social Weather Stations, Mahar Mangahas, yesterday acknowledged that the pre-election polling group made some errors in the exit polls it conducted during the May 10 elections.

SWS said in declaring that President Macapagal-Arroyo had won in Metro Manila and Southern Mindanao where her rival opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. actually carried those regions, and Bangsamoro where spoke it in election postmortem forum sponsored by the Ateneo Institute of Intelligence.

SWS also moved to update that Poe had won in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) when the official count showed otherwise, he said.

But he noted that the results of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections quick count also showed that Poe had won in ARMM, contrary to the official count.

"We are very unhappy about this. I myself don't know for sure what happened. I would also like to know," Mangahas said.

Mangahas said a seven-man independent committee has been convened to review the conduct of the exit polls and identify the factors that led to the erroneous results.

He said it was SWS' [illegible], researcher, research organization, that conducted the exit poll interviews. The SWS interpreted the data collected and the results were broadcast by ABS-CBN television, which commissioned the exit poll as part of its election coverage.

The ABS released the results of its exit poll a day after the May 10 elections when only a few [illegible] had been unofficially counted, causing a political tumult.

The SWS poll said Ms. Arroyo got 41 percent of the votes cast while Poe received 32 percent, giving the President a margin of 9 points.

With a margin of error of plus or minus 1.5 percentage points, the poll gave Ms. Arroyo a lead of 7.5 points, or the equivalent of 2.56 million votes as SWS had placed the voter turnout at 61.5 percent, or 35.46 million.

The opposition immediately denounced the SWS exit poll projecting victory for Ms. Arroyo in the presidential contest and accused ABS-CBN of "manufacturing" [illegible] the results showing that the President had won, especially in Metro Manila, which is traditionally [illegible]

SWS / A-9

FORTY days after losing her the US last May to seek medical treatment, Raul Roco arrives on Saturday looking fit and rested. [illegible]

'I'M VERY WELL'

Roco returns from US, calls self Apostle of Hope

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE "APOSTLE of Hope" is back.

Raul Roco, standard bearer of the Alyansang Pagbabago, returned home to the country Friday night after a 40-day stay in Houston, Texas.

And he brought home a message of hope and reconciliation: "We have all once to rebuild this country and there is still hope for all of us."

The 62-year-old former education secretary and senator said he was "very well."

He had lost weight but looked well, unlike on April 13 when he announced that he was flying to Houston to seek medical treatment for chronic back pain that, to the public, appeared to be a recurrence of his prostate cancer.

His decision to leave at the height of the campaign for the presidency surprised not only the public but also the Alyansang Bayan as well as his young volunteers. But he returned on April 28 to resume the "fight"—which he eventually lost.

On May 10, while the country was not looking, he spent Mother's Day in Houston and recovered from the rigors of the campaign.

Roco and his wife Sonia were welcomed Friday night at the Manny Pacquiao International Airport by their children and friends led by lawyer Lucia Bilog-Kapunan. They proceeded directly to the family residence in La Vista, Quezon City.

Roco described himself as the "apostle of hope," then told the Inquirer that what the country needed at this point was unity.

"We should all serve," he said. "There is only one country there is only one people. And we will always serve."

Roco said "there must be unity" if President Macapagal-Arroyo were to successfully govern and implement social reforms in her new administration.

"The country should get together," he said. "From [illegible] I would [illegible] the banner ... it can be very bad news. [illegible] there must be room for that [illegible] the country into the political competition. Otherwise, we'll be left behind. There must be reconciliation. There must be a renewed unified cooperation."

He also said the challenge now for his followers was to provide policies and sincere leadership in order to rally the people behind her.

Roco said before flying out on May 29 that he would soon go back to private law practice and push political reforms in the country.

ROCO / A-11

Opposition raps debate moratorium on Cha-cha

By TJ Burgonio, Michael Lim Ubac and Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE OPPOSITION yesterday scored Speaker Jose de Venecia's proposal to suspend debates on amending the Constitution, saying this was "misplaced."

De Venecia had proposed a 120-day moratorium on Charter change debates to enable legislators to pass crucial measures to correct a looming fiscal and debt crisis.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, an advocate of federalism, argued that imposing a moratorium on debates on constitutional amendments was premature as it is up to the federal parliamentary form of government was unnecessary.

"I don't buy that argument that I have should be a moratorium on the discussion of the merits and demerits of amending the Constitution. It's not necessary," he said in a phone interview. "That proposal is misplaced."

Biazon said that since public discussions of Charter-change proposals, there ought to be no moratorium and "enlightened discussions" on the issue so the people "can be guided accordingly."

"Who keep quiet now, and revive it later?" he added. "Let's continue talking about it so that it may shed more light on the advantages of amending the Constitution, not just on the issue of the Presidency."

Planned senate chair Juan Ponce Enrile of Congress could still pursue their legislative agenda and debate the issue at the same time.

De Venecia, the principal proponent of Charter change, had proposed that the two chambers reconvene themselves into a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution at the end of the 120-day moratorium.

Commitment to shift

He also claimed that Ms Arroyo had made a commitment to carry out the shift to a parliamentary-federal system during her term, not in 2010.

But Pimentel warned De Venecia's earlier proposal that Ms Arroyo could serve as president and prime minister at the same time under a parliamentary form of government.

"It sounds very Marcosian," the senator said in a statement, referring to the martial law period when President Ferdinand Marcos served as president and prime minister simultaneously.

Roco speaks

Mr. Roco pointed out that it was premature to talk of Ms Arroyo becoming a presidential prime minister because it's uncertain whether the post of President would be retained in the new system.

Former Sen. Raul Roco said yesterday that the President should fulfill her election promise to support a change in the system of government.

Roco, who arrived Friday night from the US, stressed that the issue on the shift to a parliamentary system was a "united team now business of the election."

"After the elections, and (since) those who wanted Charter change are those who won, so I guess they are entitled to push the (Charter change)," he said.

Roco said Ms Arroyo should fulfill her promise "within reason and within feasibility."

To the question on what her (Ms Arroyo) would again resign on her promise to quit in 2007 to pave the way for a parliamentary-federal system, he said: "Again, it's very difficult to make a political judgment now. But in my mind, it was a unified matter."

GMA favors Con-con

At the Palace, an official said that Ms Arroyo envisioned in favor of a constitutional convention as the mode of changing the Constitution.

The Palace official, who declined to be named, said Ms Arroyo believes Congress should reassess its job of making laws and leave the matter of Charter change to a Con-con.

"She does not want Congress to be dictacted from its legislative mandate. There are many pending measures that Congress has to tackle, including (government) revenue measures that are urgently needed by the government," the Palace official explained.

The official said the President would tell Congress, in her State-of-the-Nation Address on July 26, to approve a measure calling for the election of Con-con delegates to amend the charter.

Malacañang said the President would send her list (names of people) for appointment among our political leaders," presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said.

Get us right track

Meanwhile, Roco lamented that although the elections were over, the country had yet to resume dynamic economic and political reforms to set it on the right track.

"It's very comforting to see a country like the US ever unless overnight(ly). That should be the aspiration of every country—growth, economic activity. Of course, having said that, you now wish that everybody will be motivated by the same passion, by the same sense of participation to push the country toward the same goal," he said.

"But you cannot help those who—such self-interest. You cannot help those who will still want to subvert, not subvert in the political sense, but subvert the system's interest for personal gain," he said.

57% of Pinoys satisfied with GMA, SWS survey shows

THE APPROVAL rating of President Macapagal-Arroyo has regained since her victory in the May elections with 57 percent of Filipinos saying they were satisfied with her performance, a survey released yesterday said.

The survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations from June 4 to 20 also showed that 31 percent of respondents were dissatisfied with Ms Arroyo since she won a hotly contested term in the bitterly contested May 10 polls, giving her a net satisfaction rating of 26 percent.

The latest ratings were an improvement over similar surveys in November 2003 and March 2004 where Ms Arroyo's satisfaction rating hit 40 percent and 41 percent, respectively.

But in the March 2004 survey, 25 percent of respondents said they were dissatisfied with her performance giving her a net satisfaction rating of 16 percent.

The SWS survey also showed that 61 percent of respondents were satisfied with Ms Arroyo's performance for the entire three years she had been in power while only 27 percent said they were dissatisfied.

Ms Arroyo also scored at least 57 percent satisfaction in each area in "helping the poor," "setting a good example of morality," "promoting human rights," "maintaining peace and strengthening democracy."

She easily outscored her counterpart, predecessor, ex-senate star Joseph Estrada, in all these areas, the SWS survey showed.

The SWS poll of 1,200 adults nationwide, with a margin of error of (blank) percent, was released after Mr Arroyo defeated opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr., a movie star and key Estrada ally, in the May elections. (See related story on page A11)

Poe has refused to concede and the opposition has charged that Mr Arroyo's victory was tainted by fraud, but so far, there has been no popular clamor against her presidency.

The SWS also said that among the religious groups, the Iglesia ni Cristo are delivered determine to Mr Arroyo. Iban the Catholic charismatic group El Shaddai in the 90s (See box).

Melou Mangahas, SWS president, said that 77 percent of INC followers voted for Ms Arroyo while less than 50 percent of El Shaddai members got behind her president.

Ms Arroyo won votes Poe by 1,993,172 votes.

Speaking to a Malacañang forum at the University of the Philippines in Manila, Mangahas said the numbers were based on the results of exit polls SWS conducted during the May 10 elections.

The INC, headed by Eduardo Manalo Radio Manila reportedly has five million members while El Shaddai, led by businessman-turned-preacher Mike Velarde, claims to have seven to eight million members here and abroad. —With a report from Philip C. Tubeza

Thank You

for your continuing trust and support that has kept

GMA ON TOP

from January-June, 2004

OVERALL CHANNEL PERFORMANCE
Total Day (6am-12mn)

Nielsen Media		AGB Phils.	
CHANNEL	HOUSEHOLD RATING	CHANNEL	HOUSEHOLD RATING
GMA 7	12.7	GMA 7	16.2
ABS-CBN	12.3	ABS-CBN	15.9

CHANNEL RATING DIFFERENCES
Among Cable & Non-Cable TV Homes
Total Day (6am-12mn)

Household Ratings	Nielsen Media		AGB Phils.	
	GMA-7	ABS-CBN	GMA-7	ABS-CBN
NON-CABLE TV Homes	13	14	18	16
CABLE TV Homes	8	8	11	14
Diff. between Non-Cable & Cable	7	6	7	2

Patuloy po ang ating pagiging No. 1 ,mga Kapuso!

GMA

Kapuso mo ng 24 na oras,
Kapuso mo sa habang panahon

Holding up funds bad for local gov'ts–Nene

By TJ Burgonio

OPPOSITION Sen. Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel yesterday warned the government against withholding the release of P30 billion in the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), saying this would have dire consequences for local governmental units.

Allan Pop. Jose Infante, a member of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Economic Management Group, earlier proposed suspending the release of IRAs to LGUs to enable the government to use the funds for calamity projects.

Under the proposal, LGUs would lend a portion of their IRAs estimated at P30 billion to the national government. The LGUs would then collect the money after 10 months with interest.

The suspension of the IRA was part of the proposed austerity measures which the government plans to adopt to avert the looming fiscal crisis. The IRA represents an 2.0% share in the national tax collection.

But Pimentel, principal author of the Local Government Code, warned that withholding P30 billion from LGU funds would "devastate" the 79 provinces, 115 cities, 1,459 municipalities and 41,202 barangays in the country.

"The LGUs could ill afford the IRA fund cuts because the IRA income is already included in their annual budgets," Pimentel said in a statement, noting that the cuts would force the LGUs to scale down projects and lay off employees.

If the deductions were implemented, Pimentel said, Albay province would receive only P403 million instead of P627 million, while Cebu City would get only P527 million, instead of P658 million.

Pimentel also dared Macapagal-Arroyo to disclose the government's financial condition in view of Infante's proposal to declare a fiscal crisis and pave the way for the suspension of the IRAs.

"It should call a spade a spade," he said.

Pimentel said the drastic administration had only itself to blame for the looming fiscal crisis, recalling that Mr. Arroyo balked at pushing for the passage of new tax measures in the runup to the May 10 elections.

"It would be difficult to convince taxpayers to accept the new taxes that the government seeks to impose in the wake of allegations of diversion of public funds to the Arroyo campaign before and during the May elections," he said.

Pimentel maintained that an "aggressive and efficient" collection of existing taxes remains the best option for more revenues.

Administration Sen. Ralph Recto refused Pimentel's view, stating the government should first demonstrate its ability to collect taxes before it imposes new ones.

PAINFUL TRIBUTE: Adela Tigado (foreground) clutches the pictures of her three children and granddaughter who perished in the garbage landslide four years ago. AP, 0407070703

After 4 years, a marker

By Tina Santos

AMID THE smoke and flies, people gathered around what used to be a garbage dump in Laguna Bangalan, Quezon City, to take part in a commemoration of the Payatas tragedy.

On July 10, 2000, heavy rains caused a mountain of garbage to collapse, burying more than 200 people who made a living sorting and recycling other people's refuse. Removing their survivors gathered around a memorial marker built on exactly the same spot where the tragedy occurred.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and Quezon City Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte led the commemoration rites.

"The marker is a memorial for those who perished in the Payatas tragedy. It is also a wake-up call for the government to make sure that history does not repeat itself," said Belmonte.

Susan de la Cruz, 46, a former garbage picker, lost her house in the slide. She considers herself lucky Mei daughter, now 21, was pulled out of the humongous mound of garbage, barely alive.

Mother and child have since been relocated 10 kilometers away, but when money is scarce, they go back to the dump to pick garbage.

"This is the only way I know to earn a living," De la Cruz said. "When I need money badly, I go to the dump. But it is very hard."

Belmonte said the city government had instituted various improvements in the dumpsite for operational efficiency including the widening of the waterways around the dumpsite and controlling the volume of garbage being dumped there.

The city government has also developed the area as a potential source of energy.

According to Col. Jimmil Rigonan (ret.), chief of the Payatas Operations Group, the city government can save money because methane gas extracted from the dumpsite to generate power for the more than 300 families living in nearby communities as part of the former open dumpsite's conversion to a controlled dumping facility.

"But it's not enough," Mercy Tamano, whose relatives died in the garbage landslide, said. "Officials should work on bringing justice to those who were killed."

RP tells China to 'cool it' in Spratlys

THE PHILIPPINES called on China on Saturday to "cool it" from provocative actions in the area amid the disputed Spratly Islands after reports surfaced that a Chinese company was exploring for oil and gas in the region.

"We call for transparency in these matters and assurance from acts that would go against the goals of peaceful diplomatic solutions to any disputes," press secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

The statement followed reports that China's top oil producer, PetroChina, had been allowed to explore for oil and gas in the southern part of the South China Sea, in an area reportedly claimed by the Spratly Islands.

China and the Philippines, along with Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam, lay claim to areas around the Spratlys, which straddle vital shipping lanes and fishing grounds and are believed to contain vast oil and gas reserves.

All but Brunei have troops positioned across the archipelago of more than 100 islets, reefs and atolls.

Bunye said the Philippines was confident China would continue to respect such conversations as the "code of conduct" signed by all parties in 2002, calling on them to refrain from actions that could break the fragile peace in the South China Sea.

But he added that "we must rally behind the preservation and defense of our sovereign rights in line with current internationally accepted customs and processes." AFP

Justice on wheels: SC to field mobile courts

Front page, A1

In size is in north as Mindanao dwarves and as far south as the Zamboanga peninsula, and points in between such as remote areas in Southern Luzon and in Samar, according to Armed Khan Jr., head of the tribunal's public information office.

The "Justice on Wheels" project is expected to be in operation by the first quarter of next year, Khan said yesterday.

The Supreme Court said the mobile courts would be sent to hear cases involving domestic violence and labor, among others, and to conduct mediation, also known as alternative dispute resolution, between litigants.

The tribunal also said the project was launched because many vacancies in county courts had resulted in the delayed resolution of cases. It said the budget for the project would be taken from the provision of the Judiciary Development Fund allowed for equipment and facilities.

"Delayed justice creates a negative impact on the justice system as it undermines social, economic and even political stability and impedes national progress," the tribunal said in a statement.

"With the mobile court, not only will the problem of dispersal of pending cases in remote courts be addressed, but such will also ensure efficient and effective administration of justice to the people in places within the jurisdiction of the vacant courts," it said.

Major problem

The slow pace of justice has long been a major problem.

A Supreme Court report submitted to the Senate last year during its deliberations on the proposed budget for the judiciary for 2004 said lower courts nationwide were clogged with close to 800,000 pending and unresolved cases.

Quoting the report last September, Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya, chair of the House appropriations committee, said almost a third of the number of lower court nationwide had no judges.

Andaya said that "despite a massive campaign of the Judicial Bar Council for qualified members of the bar to cross over to the bench," lawyers were reluctant to serve as judges because of "low pay a punishing workload, plus threats to life."

Latin American model

Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. decided to launch "Justice on Wheels" after a visit to Latin America earlier this year to compare judicial reforms in the Philippines with that in Guatemala, Venezuela and Mexico.

Davide's trip was made possible by a grant from the World Bank's Policy and Human Resource Development fund, the tribunal said.

It said each mobile court would have a judge's office, a deliberation room and rooms for the clerical staff and the prosecutor.

An ad hoc committee chaired by Associate Justice Adolfo Azcuna will design the mobile court and formulate the rules on the implementation of the project.

The committee has until Thursday to submit the design and the draft rules for the tribunal's approval.

The tribunal said Azcuna had first hand experience with the mobile courts in Guatemala, which became operational in March 2000.

The mobile courts in Guatemala were patterned on a similar project in Brazil that was initiated in 1999 with the help of the World Bank.

Priests vow Christ-like lifestyle amid sex scandals

HUNDREDS Catholic priests in the Philippines on Friday pledged to follow a "Christ-like lifestyle" after the country's dominant religion was rocked by sex scandals.

A total of 2,000 bishops, priests and deacons from Asia's largest Catholic country ended the days of a "mystical renewal" seminar here with a vow to "renew our commitment to serve wholeheartedly."

A spate of high-profile controversies including priests using children, homosexuality and sexual misconduct prompted the local Church leadership to convene the Manila retreat to remind priests of their responsibilities.

"The priesthood is a gift that the Lord does not take back despite our brokenness and sins," the evangelization a closing statement.

The priests, who must take a vow of celibacy, pledged to "develop a vibrant life of prayer that will nurture a Christ-like lifestyle, marked by discipline, self-offering and single-hearted action." The statement did not specifically address the sex scandals.

Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales, the archbishop of Manila, told reporters, "there will be an attempt by other people, especially the media, to smear the congress in terms of final statements, resolutions, or actions especially regarding other many like morality issues and concerns."

"But these attempts will be futile if the deepen and more intangible effects are not understood," During the retreat, Church leaders said the Philippines had less than 9,000 priests and needed 20,000 more to minister to the spiritual needs of nearly 70 million Filipino Catholics.

Sex scandals and materialism had contributed to the decline in the ranks, with the youth more no not interested in entering the priesthood, said Bishop Luis Antonio Tagle.

Some 200 sexual offense cases have been filed against Filipino priests over the past 20 years, while the archbishop of a northern Manila cabal's resigned late last year for an "inappropriate expression of affection" to a female member of his staff.

The Church in the Philippines has played a major role in shaping public opinion, and in 1986 and in 2001 was instrumental in toppling the gravel-ridden presidencies of Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada. AFP

SWS admits it made errors in exit poll

Front page, A1

MANGUNAD: Off in Metro Manila, Southern Mindanao and ARMM

ordered opposition country.

The opposition decried the vote publicity that the SWS poll exercised suburb it and was accepted by the public.

The early quick results by the AMA Computer College and Hamlet also showed Mr. Arroyo in the lead.

The official count later showed the SWS exit poll was off on the Metro Manila results. The official count also showed that Poe had won in all but one of the 11 cities and municipalities of Metro Manila.

Mangudan said an initial review showed some "shortcuts" in the conduct of the poll but they had been no deliberate attempt to feed false information.

"We don't find any sabotage. There was no deliberate changing of results," he said.

Mangudan declined to elaborate, saying that it would be better if the review committee was allowed to finish its investigation.

Below expectation

But he admitted to being disappointed that the number of voters interviewed for the exit poll was below what the SWS had expected.

He said the group had expected that 10,000 voters would be interviewed but only 4,460 were actually questioned.

While this number was enough for a reasoned survey, they were "disappointingly below expectations" when broken down into regions, Mangudan said.

He noted that there were only 489 voters interviewed in the vote-rich Metro Manila region.

Mangudan said the fact that it rained in several regions on election day may have resulted in the low number of interviewees.

The independent committee will go over the whole process of the exit poll. It will review the questions asked, the manner in which they were actually asked, the data processing and the decisions on the results.

Mangudan said it was ABS-CBN that made the decision to be behind the results.

Apart from the May 10 elections, the SWS had conducted three previous nationwide exit polls...in 1995, 1998 and 2001.

The results of the past SWS exit polls had all been accurate.

Exit polls, which originated in the United States, are post-election surveys conducted at voters leave the polling precincts in order to determine the likely winner soon after the voting. Often, the respondents are asked to fill out questionnaires asking for their ages, sex, which candidates they voted for and why.

Unlike in the US, however, field researchers in SWS conduct the exit poll surveys in the privacy of the respondents' homes.

It was ABS-CBN that sponsored the exit poll in which the SWS interviewed 4,027 respondents nationwide at their residences a day after they cast their votes.

Margin of error

A margin of error of plus or minus 1.5 percentage points means that the survey results would differ by the same count by at most 1.5 percent.

The SWS exit poll predicted a 44 percent victory for Ms Arroyo against Poe's 25 percent. The official count gave her 40 percent of the vote against Poe's 34 percent.

The SWS poll said Ms Arroyo won 34 percent of the vote in Metro Manila against Poe's 25 percent. The official count showed the winning Mayor Manila by 37 percent against the President's 24 percent.

Southern Mindanao

In Southern Mindanao, the SWS poll showed the President carrying the Unino region by 53 percent against Poe's 30 percent and Soriaguez by 47 percent against Poe's 39 percent. In the official count, Poe won in the Davao region, 42 percent against Ms Arroyo's 40 percent, and Soriaguez 39 percent against the President's 32 percent.

Conversely, the SWS exit poll had Poe winning in the ARMM 58 percent against Ms Arroyo's 44 percent. The official count gave the President a 62 percent victory there against Poe who got 31 percent of the vote.

AFP lowers alert level in M Manila

By Nicain Plaza

THE MILITARY has lowered its alert level to "white," the lowest level in the military, in Metro Manila and surrounding areas due to the improved security situation.

In a statement, retired Armed Forces of the Philippines Public Information Office chief Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said the alert level was lowered yesterday at 6 p.m.

The military had been on red alert since the week before the May 10 elections. White alert means all troops sent to Metro Manila to reinforce local troops would be sent back to their mother units.

It also means it is business as usual in all military camps in the National Capital Region with all troops resuming their "normal activities," Lucero said.

But Maj. Irene Rosmil Lumaoc, spokesperson of the AFP's NCR Command, clarified that the unit was actually on "blue" alert since it is standard operating procedure to be one alert status higher than that announced by AFP General Headquarters as a precaution.

Blue alert means that half of the enlisted personnel in military camps in Metro Manila would have to cancel their leaves and be at their assigned posts.

Officials who backed gun show blasted

By Luige del Puerto

THE PRESENCE of ranking police and government officials at the opening last Thursday of a gun show at SM Megamall has left a bad taste in the mouth of anti-gun advocates.

"Did the PNP [Philippine National Police] and Mandaluyong City officials consider why they gave the arms show a permit at a time the police have ad. mitted to having difficulty in going after loose firearms?" asked Mindy Pacheco, founder and president of Gunless Society, in a phone interview with the Inquirer.

According to police estimates, the number of "loose" or unlicensed firearms in the country had ballooned to around half a million in the past 10 years.

On top of the estimated 200,000 guns whose owners had failed to renew their licenses since last year, the number of loose firearms has grown to 500,000 over the last decade, the report said.

Police records showed that a total of 21,754 guns were involved in criminal cases from 1995 to May this year. Of this total, 11,851 were unlicensed while only 1,953 were licensed.

For propriety's sake, Pacheco said, the police and government officials should have stayed away from the gun show opening.

"How could we promote a culture of peace when our actions show otherwise," he said.

The Gunless Society has been at the forefront of promoting gun control in the Philippines.

Pacheco also pointed out the irony of holding the arms show in the mall—which families, young people and children regularly visit to have fun.

"Did the owners of the mall consider that it is a place for children and young people?" he said, adding that this sends the wrong signal to the public.

A LETTER to President Arroyo is read by Jenick, son of Angelo de la Cruz, outside the De la Cruz home in Barangay Buenavista, Mexico, Pampanga. At right is his youngest brother Jefferson. DAVID GUCO

Lowly truck driver unites a divided nation

Front page of A1

appeal is double in the hostage-takers is free their captive.

Militant groups in Manila and elsewhere held prayer vigils that were to last through the night.

"Allah, we hope that the beheading of De la Cruz in Iraq would not push through," Ustadz Ameril Ambolong, head of the Manila Islamic Muslims' Mass and Coordinating Council, and followers prayed at the Grand Mosque inside the Islamic Center in Manila.

"We also pray that the beheading of De la Cruz's captors would be opposed, so they would pay him, and send him back well and alive to his family here in the Philippines," they said.

CBCP's special Mass

The influential Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines also held a special mass celebrated Mass at the Manila Bishops de Gaia church in Ermita attended by scores of people.

Outside the church, many said the country

"Let us not blame the hostage people. They are probably like us languishing at the thought that an innocent man might suffer death," Bishop Ramon Arguelles said. "It is only a few misguided ones who probably want to create international [incident]."

Arguelles added: "Till then we are there not because we are the lackeys of the Americans, not because we are following an anti-terrorist international policy—but we are there to save another people ... who may be lacking in education ..."

Cebuanos, Negrenses

Cebuanos and Negrenses joined in the nationwide prayers.

In Cebu, around 20 Jesus de Lauel Missionary pastors held a prayer vigil through the night. Their prayers included a plea for the government to pull out its troops in Iraq.

Members of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in Cebu and in affiliate groups were also holding a vigil and a candle lighting activity at Fuente Osmeña Park.

In Bacolod City, Catholic Church leaders urged Negrenses to join the rest of the nation in praying for the safe release of De la Cruz.

Fr. Jesuito Sumale, head of the Diocese of Bacolod Social Action Center, said 4,000 priests attending the national congress of the clergy in Manila were also praying for De la Cruz.

The Reds, too

In a radio interview, Communist New People's Army spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal urged all Filipinos to do what they could to show they were in sympathy with De la Cruz and his family, and to make known to the government the need to pull out Filipino troops from Iraq.

"Let us join prayer rallies, prayer rallies, vigils, and let us light candles," Rosal said. "That will help open the eyes of the people that what is needed to free Angelo de la Cruz is for the government to comply to the demands of the Iraqui group."

If De la Cruz were beheaded, "the revolutionary movement will find a way to bring down the puppet leader of the puppet government," he said.

Muslims

Abdul Marliza, vice governor of the Muslim autonomous region in the southern Philippines and an Islamic religious leader, told the insurgents in Arabic that De la Cruz "is a man truck driver struggling to buy ... to feed his poor family here."

On behalf of the Muslims in this country, we are appealing to the kidnappers to please free this man," he said.

Appearing grim-faced, Robin Padilla, who belongs to the Reform to Islam Movement, offered to take the place of De la Cruz in Iraq.

"Our countrymen are not your enemies," Padilla told the kidnappers. "We are traveling on the same road. Muslims and Christians should live under the light of peace."

He said Islamic leaders had tried to build understanding between Muslims and Christians, and following decades of conflict in the Philippines, the majority De la Cruz now sees "listening to the message of Islam."

"If you proceed with beheading Angelo de la Cruz, all our efforts will be wasted," Padilla said.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzalez said the government had tapped contacts in the Muslim world to talk to the hostage-takers.

Yesterday, Ambassador Roy Cimatu left for Iraq from Dubai to take charge of the negotiations for the release of De la Cruz.

Cimatu, head of the government's intelligence body Team, was ordered by Mr Arroyo to conduct back-channel talks with De la Cruz's captors.

The envoy was also seeking a meeting with the Iraqi foreign minister.

Philippine diplomats in Baghdad also met with representatives of the Iraqi Islamic Party, the same group that helped in the release of another driver, Francisco Rodrigonzos, who was abducted by insurgents in April.

The Philippine ambassador to Qatar, Wenceslao Jose Quiaoit, also made an appeal for the restoration of the deadline, in a broadcast over Al-Jazeera.

One Filipino diplomat in the Middle East, who asked not to be named, said there was hope that De la Cruz would be rescued and that an extension of the deadline was possible.

"He as long as they are talking, hopefully they will not kill the hostage," he said.

Meanwhile, Philippine envoy to the Gulf Cooperation Council Ayesha Jalil left for the Middle East yesterday to seek support in the region for the release of De la Cruz.

DFA Undersecretary Rafael Seguis also left for the Middle East the other night to coordinate the government's efforts there.

In New York City, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan expressed his concern over the fate of De la Cruz and two Bulgarian hostages also held in Iraq and called on their captors to release them.

"The secretary general is deeply concerned about the threats to the lives of two Bulgarians and one Filipino national who are reportedly held hostage by Iraqi militants," Annan's spokesperson Manu Okabe said in a statement, which was broadcasted by the DFA.

"The secretary general calls for the release of these three persons and all other innocent civilians who may have been abducted for political ends in the conflict," she added.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzalez said "we have talked to the religious leaders of Indonesia, Malaysia, Libya and Egypt, all very influential religious leaders," to work for the freedom of De la Cruz.

He said these religious leaders "replied to us that they will also first use private negotiation," for the freedom of De la Cruz.

Gonzalez advised the highest Muslim religious leader in the Philippines also sent an appeal to the kidnappers that the killing of De la Cruz would hurt the image and stature of the Muslim minority in the Philippines.

But Gonzalez also warned the public to brace for the worst, saying "we are trading with people that are not easy to talk to. They are not like us."

He compared De la Cruz's capture to how Muslim extremists in the South who had also kidnapped and killed Christians.

Gonzalez insisted it would hurt the country's international standing if it withdrew the troops before the government's commitment to stay in Iraq ended on Aug. 20. With reports from Jaime Laboy-Arrellano, Martin F. Abadilla, Jerome Aning, Jaime del Puerto and Lolit R. Schorrer in Manila; PDI Mindanao and Visayas Bureaus

Angelo's family turns to prayer

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—As the 3 a.m. Sunday deadline drew near, the family of Angelo de la Cruz huddled inside a tightly secured villa here yesterday afternoon, praying together and seeking a miracle that would stop his beheading by Iraqi militants.

"We are relying now on the help and love of God," Jacquelyn, the fourth in the brood of eight, said in Kapampangan in a phone interview from the villa.

Jacquelyn, 28, said they still hadn't given up hope for their 47-year-old father, a truck driver for a Saudi company. He was taken hostage in Iraq in connection with Baby-ion-Iraq border.

De la Cruz's wife, Arsenia, did not take the second call, with Jacquelyn explaining the family was entering some round of worries.

In their temporary home since Friday night, Arsenia and the children, especially the younger ones, had time to eat and be spared from media interviews, according to Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid. He visited them at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

Another government official who had been with Arsenia since Thursday said that all the family has been doing was praying.

"They don't feel resigned," Lapid said of the family's disposition.

Arsenia still wore her rosaries and medals on her neck. A social worker from the regional department of Social Welfare and Development had stayed with the children since Friday.

"They have been stressed out by media interviews," the governor said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo assured help for the 911 operations of De la Cruz's son Jenick and special education for another son Jeffrey, who has Down syndrome.

It was Arsenia who asked that her children be withheld in the villa, Lapid said.

According to him, the family felt assured that the government, especially the President, was doing "all the best" to obtain the safe release of De La Cruz.

In Barangay Buenavista in Mexico town where the De la Cruzes live, villagers have also observed to prayer power.

Starting Friday night, the women have been holding prayers and processions seeking the intercession of St. Joseph, the patron of fathers, and gathered for songs of praise. One woman held a phonograph of De La Cruz as she begged the heavens for a miracle.

De La Cruz, the woman's prayer went, "needs to be saved because his children still need him."

"He's a good man and he has only his family's welfare in mind," the prayer further went.

Candles lighted the path to the family's modest tile hut. A statue of a crucified Christ was the central figure in the makeshift altar filled with other images of saints in the Catholic faith. With a report from Jhunice Galang, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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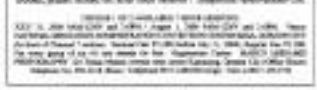

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THE PRAYERS go on round-the-clock from Angelo de la Cruz's hometown of Mexico, Pampanga, where this picture was taken, on the eve of the deadline for his safe release. DAVID GUCO

Suspension a bad precedent, says Puno

By TJ Burgonio

THE OMBUDSMAN'S move to suspend incumbent Rep. Rodolfo Plaza over a pending graft charge against him in connection with the mall-building scandal in Cagayan de Oro was setting a "bad precedent," Plaza claimed yesterday.

Ombudsman prosecutors have filed a motion with the Sandiganbayan seeking the suspension of Plaza, citing the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act which provides that no incumbent public official facing graft charges should be suspended.

Plaza, who is the ranking elected representative of Surigao and is the interim president of the ruling Lakas-Kampi-CMD party, said the motion, if granted by the anti-graft court, would open the floodgates to the filing of similar motions against other legislators.

"This is going to be a bad precedent. I don't know if their [legislators] will be elated by [the filing] a motion for the suspension of some government officials in the middle of (an) election. A good policy," he said in an interview after a press forum in Quezon City.

"And of course, you can't deprive a district of its representation power even the conclusion of a case," he added.

Plaza was Senator secretary in the Estrada administration when he cranked two approved contracts worth P430 million for Davao Inc., Philippine dealer of Motorola, an international television firm, to supply the Philippine National Police with a multi-band radio system.

An independent citizen's investigator committee appointed by Estrada and headed by lawyer Nini Jacinto recommended Plaza's indictment in October 1999. It said that Plaza "exhibited material interest in the contract" that would later be awarded to another Motorola dealer in which Plaza's brother and brother-in-law had acquired a controlling interest.

On Feb. 1, 2000, the Ombudsman filed graft charges against Plaza, who survived a "no-I-will" plea.

Prosecutors alleged that the committee's failure of the contracts resulted to a loss to the government of at least P150 million in additional equipment, training and services, as well as country codes from Motorola. It also caused damage and injury to Motorola.

In all about $3.6 million and deprived Davao of its commission amounting to P6 million.

Puno remember questioned why the Ombudsman filed a motion for his suspension only after the prosecution had rested its presentation of evidence.

"We're analyzing... sure there's no evidence, we're filing a motion to dismiss," he said.

He explained that the move was related to the jockeying for committee chairmanships in the House of Representatives and denied that Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., the chair of the House committee on appropriations, was behind it.

He believed Andaya was shot for his resolutions proposing that Rep. Joey Salceda be made the new chair of the committee on appropriations, and Rep. Arnil Lopez chair of the committee on ways and means.

PCGG wants to see 'Imelda'

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION on Good Government (PCGG) said it was "interested" in seeing the controversial documentary film on former RSC Lady Imelda Marcos.

"It will be interesting to know what she has to say in this film," the PCGG lawyers said.

The PCGG has been trying to find and recover all the alleged ill-gotten wealth stashed away by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his cronies since 1986, when the Marcoses were driven out of the Palace in the first Edsa People Power revolt.

The PCGG lawyers said the (then) Regional Trial Court's temporary restraining order (TRO) "violates the right of the public to view the film and how he/she (Imelda) lived her four-day reality in."

PCGG Chair Mayder Puno, however, would not issue a statement on the latest controversy involving Imelda Marcos.

"She [Imee] just smiled," said the PCGG media when asked what her reaction was.

The Manila court had succeeded in stopping the showing of the documentary, called "Imelda" after the got a TRO from Makati Judge Silvia Cristina Gorayo on June 25. Bonz A. Magsaysay

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WORLD POOL

Django leads RP charge

DJANGO BUSTAMANTE and Lee Van Corteza flashed near-perfect form to realize short work of the formerwise bests and lead a strong Philippine charge yesterday in the 2004 World Pool Championships at the World Trade Center in Chinese Taipei.

Bustamante only had one scare, a dash cut on the 1 ball in the 4th game as he whitewashed Chang Ting Min, 5-0. Corteza clinched Taiwanese Yuvo Ying Ching-Shun, 5-2.

The two-wins more than made up for the loss of another Filipino, Rustil Soliga, who led, 2-1, but dropped to a 3-4 defeat to defending champion Thomas Robatimi of Germany.

Bustamante also crushed Phil Pillen-ger of New Zealand, 5-1, later in the day.

Antonio Gabica got going with a 5-0 blanking of American Steve Lillo.

Another specialist Marlon Manalo topped Timothy Hall, 5-1, while Rodel Is Lunt brought down Mike Davis, 5-3. Lunt went on to frustrate our a thrilling 5-4 triumph over England's Steve Davis.

Manalo later downed Alan Rubio of Puerto Rico, 5-3. Antonio Lining also made a successful debut, slipping past Al Legaro of Canada, 5-4.

Warren Kiamco topped Danny Basimon of the US, 5-4, even as Candy Wilcox split his first two matches, crushing Kathleen Mohnen of New Zealand, 5-1, before losing to Taiwan's Chou Ying-Chieh, 5-3.

The legendary Jose "Amang" Parica said he/she would post champion Efren "Bata" Reyes have yet to see action.

Marlon Bermudez

WHAT'S INSIDE

Angelo makes final appeal

Roco returns from US . . .

From page A1

DR LA CRUZ: Final appeal exclusive video from Al-Jazeera

...ban order to see [a] way to save a boy," Gonzalez added.

Now is time to quit

But Ambassador Reynaldo Imclis, former Philippine alternate representative to the UN Security Council, now says the best time to withdraw the troops from Iraq.

Imclis cited a June 8 UN Resolution which declared Iraq's transition to a democratic government by December 2005.

The resolution provided for the formation of an interim government by June 30, the holding of direct democratic elections by Jan. 31, 2005 to form a transitional government and the drafting of a permanent constitution to pave the way for a constitutionally-elected government in Iraq by Dec. 31, 2005.

"It won't make a difference to the US-led coalition anymore because the foreign troops will have to leave Iraq in a matter of months. Pullout ng mga troops will save a few more US [and] Filipino lives," Imclis said.

"The US might decide to pull out ahead and that will leave us in the lurch," Imclis said, explaining this was possible, especially if Democratic John Kerry beats President George W. Bush in the US elections in November. *With a report from Al Jazeera, Inquirer Africa*

From page A1

On Friday night, however, he said there were "many things going on" and he had "no specific plans" on the measure.

Still, he promised the public and his two million voters that they would see more of him in the coming days.

"I'll be around. You will see me," the ex-Senate president said, adding: "I come back to fulfill some promises."

But he did not elaborate.

Away too long

Roco said that although he had plenty of time for rest and reflection—including a side trip to the Bermuda Area to see Space Adams, amateur (Ham) broadcaster—he could not afford to stay too long in the United States.

He said there were also boring times during his stateside break, and laughingly quipped: "The number of books I've read, I tell you."

However, the "ones well-known for his incisive remarks on national issues" seemed to have been away too long.

He chose not to comment on the political issues confronting the President at this point, such as the resignation of Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman and the appointment of Angelo Reyes as interior secretary.

"I'm fairly updated right now," he said. "The only thing I want to say is that we must all unite without making a judgment."

He added: "I have no minister right now, except ... to serve the country. That's all. It's the only country we have."

Roco likewise refused to comment on Bb Mayon's 10-point program—the subject of her inaugural speech on June 30.

However, he said Bb Mayon should not back track on her promise to support a change in the system of government. (See story on Page A12)

Asked about his health, Roco said: "I'm very well, as well as can be expected. I'm very well. Fortunately, I'm well enough to be here."

But he said he wanted to recover from the 12-hour flight from Los Angeles to Manila.

"I have been away too long," says Roco on arrival with Senate ex-Pres Mada...

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

World Court says Israel barrier illegal

THE HAGUE—The world court on Friday delivered a sweeping indictment of Israel's controversial barrier in the occupied West Bank, declaring it illegal and calling for parts to be torn down.

In a ruling hailed by the Palestinians but rejected out of hand by Israel, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) said if the barrier became permanent it would be tantamount to a "de facto annexation" of occupied land.

It called for the United Nations to act after determining that the wall, which is seen across West Bank villages in half, breached international law.

"The route of the construction should be halted immediately and sections which encroach on Palestinian territory should be dismantled.

The barrier infringed the rights of Palestinian residents who had seen their homes and farmland seized or destroyed, it added, and called on Israel to pay compensation for the hardship caused.

The Palestinians wanted no time in demanding international sanctions against Israel, while veteran leader Yasser Arafat hailed the decision as a "victory for the Palestinian people."

"We salute this decision condemning the racist wall," Arafat said.

But the Jewish state dismissed the court's "advisory opinion" even before it was issued and vowed that construction of the 700 km (seven-hundred-kilometer) fortified wire and concrete wall would continue unabated.

Israel insists the barrier is necessary to prevent Palestinian attacks but the Palestinians denounce it as little more than a land grab aimed at pre-empting a definitive demarcation of the border of a future state.

The Hague-based court, the highest UN legal body, said it recognized Israel's right to defend itself but that its security concerns did not justify the hardship caused by the wall.

But Israel said the ICJ was not competent to debate the issue and accused it of ignoring "Palestinian terrorism," which it said was the main factor behind the wall's construction.

"No country would have acted differently in the face of such a criminal campaign," an Israeli government statement said, adding that since the September 2000 start of the Palestinian intifada nearly 1,000 Israelis had been killed and tens of thousands wounded.

Israel was backed by its top ally the United States, which said it believed a "bright future" for the court is none a ruling on a "political issue."

But EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said while the European Union recognized Israel's right to self-defense, the barrier has "had a devastating impact on the daily life of Palestinians and has caused untold humanitarian and economic hardship, but also created prejudge former negotiations and hinder a just political solution to the conflict," he said.

The Palestinians sought international guarantees for Israel.

"This decision will lead to the isolation of Israel, and the international community should impose sanctions against Israel, for it is violating the law and international decisions," said top Arafat adviser Nabil Abu Rudeina.

Amid huge controversy and against a backdrop of sectarian violence, the ICJ was ordered by the UN General Assembly last year to issue the legal interpretation of the barrier.

Leaders of rights of the Palestinian territories, land on the Israeli side of the barrier, have also been before the court's ruling, which was adopted by 14 votes to one. The sole dissenter was an American judge who said the court lacked "credibility" because it had failed to give serious consideration to submissions made by Israel.

"The construction of such a wall inevitably constitutes breaches by Israel of various of its obligations under the applicable international humanitarian law and human rights instruments," the ruling said. AFP

A PALESTINIAN woman walks with her children past the construction site for the security barrier Israel is building to separate Jerusalem from the West Bank July 9. AFP

5 key facts about UN Court

THE HAGUE—Here are five key facts about the World Court:

* The World Court, or International Court of Justice (ICJ), is the highest legal authority of the United Nations and has set up to resolve disputes between states and give advisory opinions on questions of international law referred by UN bodies.

* The ICJ is based in the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Netherlands, and began work in 1946 when it replaced the Permanent Court of International Justice, which operated in The Hague from 1922 under the auspices of the League of Nations.

* Since 1946 the court has made 79 judgments on disputes between states, including cases on territorial boundaries, diplomatic relations and hostage-taking.

* It has given 20 advisory opinions, the most high-profile of which was in 1971 ruling condemning arrest against apartheid South Africa's illegal occupation of South West Africa, now Namibia, prompting international sanctions and reversal Namibian independence.

* The ICJ is separate from the newly established International Criminal Court (ICC), which is also headquartered in The Hague. The ICC is the first permanent world tribunal set up to prosecute individuals for war crimes, genocide and other gross human rights violations. Reuters

Crucial Bush military service records destroyed

WASHINGTON—Records that could have settled a political dispute over President George W. Bush's service in the Air National Guard three decades ago were accidentally destroyed, the Pentagon said on Friday.

Microfilm payroll records of large numbers of service members, including Bush, were destroyed in 1998 and 1997 in a project to save storage, he in the wake of hurricanes, Defense Finance and Accounting Service spokesman Bryan Hubbard told Reuters.

Bush's whereabouts during his service as a pilot in the Texas Air National Guard in the United States during the Vietnam War have become an election year issue, with some Democrats accusing him of shirking his duty.

The destroyed files kept to Limner on determining 2,000 lost rolls of microfilm covered three months of a period in 1972 and 1973, when Bush's claims of service with the guard in Alabama are in question.

"It [the files] just couldn't. We were attempting to improve the [microfilm]," Hubbard told Reuters. He said he did not know why the destruction had not been previously announced.

The White House said it has already been shown that Bush performed his duties in the National Guard.

"We released all of the documents that are available. We made that clear at the time and that's been reiterated over the years ... he's done fulfilled his duties in the National Guard at the time. And there is nothing new in this report," said White House spokeswoman Claire Buchan.

Last November, the White House released hundreds of pages of Bush's military records. Those records did not provide new evidence to place Bush in Alabama during the latter part of 1972, when witnesses claim he was reportedly absent without leave.

The White House said on Friday that it had included a footnote in those earlier records explaining that files for the 3rd quarter of 1972 had apparently been lost in microfilm processing.

"The whole thing was inadvertent. It happened a long time ago at a files storage site in Denver," a senior defense official, who asked not to be identified, said. Reuters

Russian editor of Forbes mag shot dead in Moscow

MOSCOW—Gunmen have shot dead the Russian editor of Forbes magazine, who earned notoriety by writing a book about mafia magnate Boris Berezovsky.

Paul Khlebnikov, 41, had walked out of his office late on Friday in northeastern Moscow when a car pulled up and several shots were fired at him. Khlebnikov, a U.S. citizen of Russian origin, died on his way to hospital.

He was the latest victim of post-Soviet city-centre killings which have struck down officials, businessmen and journalists.

Seven empty used cartridges of two different calibres were found, suggesting two assailants had opened fire.

Forbes, the magazine which tracks the wealth of the world's wealthy, started publication in Russia in April and a month later issued a list of Russia's biggest fortunes. Dominated by oil magnates and metals moguls, it revealed Moscow to be the city with the world's most billionaires.

The editor of Berezovsky's Russian language edition, Sibneftegazchtorg, told Interfax news agency he had rushed to Khlebnikov after the attack and spoke to him to be try dying.

"I asked Paul several times why he thought this had happened," Gurdayev was quoted as saying. "Paul said he didn't know. He told me several times nothing suspicious had happened to him. He said something every about it. He just asked for help."

Interfax quoted others associated with the magazine as saying they had no notion of who might be behind the murder.

Numerous among very tough and powerful people publicly didn't like the Forbes project, Leonid Berezhkhoy publisher of both Forbes and Berezovsk in Russia, told the agency.

But Soviet public life has been marked by "contract murders", particularly in the 1990s, of prominent figures singled out because of their business or political activities.

Recent victims have included Russian rights advocate and member of parliament Galina Starovoitova in 1998, Mikhail Trepashkin, former colonel-rich Mogadan region in 2000 and liberal politician Sergei Yushenkov last year.

Forbes clashed with Berezovsky over Khlebnikov's 2000 book entitled "Godfather of the the Kremlin: Boris Berezovsky and the Looting of Russia." Reuters

KHLEBNIKOV

HERMANN HESSE CENTENNIAL

Pablo Neruda, in Paris after being awarded the 1971 Nobel Literature Prize. Next: July 13 commemorates the 130th anniversary of the birth of Marconi, who was the author of the most read love poems in the world. AFP/AFP/EPA

Freed hostage says he saw Iraqis behead 3 captives

DUBAI/BAGHDAD—A Pakistani man freed by Iraqi insurgents last week and instructed he saw three men behead by masked gunmen who had kidnapped South Korean while he was held captive for eight days.

"I was locked in a room with a window and I saw a Iraqi man beheading three people, two of them English-speaking, with a sword," Amjad Nadeem Arif, speaking by telephone from Rawalpindi.

Hafeez, 26, who was released on July 2, eight days after being kidnapped Sami Mahal, 75, his son-in-al Baghdad, returned home Friday after meeting Pakistani his family from Pakistani Embassy.

Hafeez, who was working as a driver for a US company said he was captured while returning from work and was taken blindfolded to a house.

He said the day after the abduction he was dumped in the boot of a car and transferred to another house where he remained till he was released.

"I was in the house when he saw the men. I was for hours, who could hardly walk, handcuffed a long sword and cut the heads of three fellow captives one after the other.

"The executioner spoke in a black Arabic voice and his face was horrible," Nadeem said.

The captives cried and begged for mercy as the Iraqi man killed them one by one.

He said he heard one of the captives pleading in English that he was a poor man and he had come in Iraq to work.

"I am not against you, we are people like you, we have come here to work, please don't kill me," Hafeez quoted the victim as saying.

Hafeez said he prayed for the agitated he knew that his turn would be next. AFP

Hafeez said he prayed for the agitated he knew that his turn would be next. AFP

20 companies linked to nuclear arms black market

By George Jahn

VIENNA, Austria—More than 20 firms—including at least one American company—have supplied vague technical wording invalidation, marking the first time a UN company has been linked to the black market network.

International atomic Energy Agency Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, who is heading a probe into the illicit sales, revealed specifics on the business of the companies in an interview with The Associated Press Friday.

But a senior diplomat said at least one was in the United States—the first time in five months of investigations by the UN, member-states that such companies were involved.

The diplomat, who did not name any of the companies, said Syria and Saudi Arabia were being investigated as possible buyer nations, in addition to Iran, Iran, Libya and North Korea—countries already known to have bought from or been in contact with the clandestine network.

The diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told the AP that beyond suspicions pointing to continuing involvement, "there has been no proof" that would warrant Syria and Saudi Arabia being separated to the IAEA board of governors.

Syria has been cited by the United States as trying to acquire the technology to make nuclear weapons, including centrifuges needed to enrich uranium, a charge Damascus denies.

Saudi Arabia has denied news reports that it agreed to supply Pakistan with oil in exchange for nuclear know-how or a bridge against fears that Iran was developing nuclear weapons.

Israel has good intelligence on its neighbors, but does not appear to consider Syria or the Saudis the primary threat to peace in the region. During ElBaradei's visit to Israel, which ended Thursday, officials repeatedly expressed concern about Iran's nuclear ambitions, but did not mention the other two countries, according to officials familiar with the discussions in Jerusalem.

ElBaradei's roster on Israel had been kept confidential by the agency. But he confirmed Friday that he had arrived from Dubai, a major shipping and supply point used by the Khan network for clients in the Middle East and possibly some African nations.

ElBaradei said he had talked to the defense, police and foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates on ways to block plastic and other transport routes for illicit nuclear shipments.

"We are likely there with updating security in the Emirates," ElBaradei said without elaboration.

Of the companies that have supplied the nuclear black market, he would give no details beyond saying they were in "over 20 countries, some of them in North America."

The diplomat said ElBaradei also had pressed for direct access to some of the Khan middlemen who had worked out of Dubai.

ElBaradei said his agency's investigations had included its operations similar to the one run by Khan. "From what we have seen so far, it was all under his nose sight," the U.N. nuclear agency chief said.

Investigators earlier this year be behind the murder.

"Numerous among very tough and powerful people publicly didn't like the Forbes project," Leonid Berezhkhoy publisher of both Forbes and Berezovsk in Russia, told the agency.

But Soviet public life has been marked by "contract murders", particularly in the 1990s, of prominent figures singled out because of their business or political activities.

Recent victims have included Russian rights advocate and member of parliament Galina Starovoitova in 1998, Mikhail Trepashkin, former colonel-rich Mogadan region in 2000 and liberal politician Sergei Yushenkov last year.

Forbes clashed with Berezovsky over Khlebnikov's 2000 book entitled "Godfather of the the Kremlin: Boris Berezovsky and the Looting of Russia." Reuters

US spies overstated Iraqi weapons threat, says US Senate probe

WASHINGTON—United States intelligence agencies overstated the threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, relied on dubious sources and ignored contrary evidence in the run-up to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, a Senate committee reported on Friday.

In a harshly-critical report, the Senate Intelligence Committee took US spy agencies to task for numerous failures in reporting on alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which President George W Bush cited in building a case for war. No such weapons have been found.

But the report found no sign that the White House had pressured analysts to reach pre-set conclusions.

"The committee did not find any evidence that administration officials attempted to coerce, influence or pressure analysts to change their judgments related to Iraq's programs of mass destruction capabilities," it said.

The second part of the committee's investigation—examining how the Bush administration used the intelligence—was unlikely to be finished before the New Zyounkistd election.

The bipartisan report, which ran to more than 500 pages and was partly blacked out for security reasons, said that conclusions in an October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraqi weapons programs "either overstated or were not supported by the underlying intelligence reporting." It found that US agencies relied too heavily on Iraqi defectors and foreign intelligence services for information and would not check the reliability of such reports.

US Sen. John Rockefeller of West Virginia, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said the Senate would not have voted overwhelmingly in 2002 to approve the use of force had known how deeply flawed the intelligence was.

"The administration at all levels, and to some extent us, used bad information to bolster its case for war," he said.

"And we in Congress would not have authorized that war ... if we knew what we know now," Rockefeller said the Iraq war left the United States less safe and would affect national security for generations.

"Our credibility is diminished. Our standing in the world has never been lower," he said. "We have fostered a deep hatred of Americans in the Muslim world, and that will grow. As a direct consequence, our nation is more vulnerable today than ever before." Senate Democrats said it remained an open question whether undue pressure was applied by the administration to shape the intelligence, and that unveiled matter an entry.

Bush-cited intelligence suggesting that Iraq was aggressively pursuing unconventional weapons programs is a key justification for his decision to go to war in 2003.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Pat Roberts said spy agencies suffered from a "collective group think" in which the intelligence gathered was viewed with the presumption that Iraq was actively pursuing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs.

"This 'group think' caused the community to interpret ambiguous evidence, such as the procurement of dual-use technology as conclusive evidence of the existence of WMD programs," said Roberts, a Kansas Republican.

The report blamed managers from the CIA director downward for failing to adequately question analysts about their assessments and to encourage other analysts had lost their objectivity.

The report said US intelligence "did not have a single" source collecting information about Iraqi weapons programs after 1998, when CIA weapons inspectors left Iraq.

Almost all of the problems with human spying capabilities stemmed from "a broken espionage culture and poor management," the report said. Reuters

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Tams, Falcons rip foes; Ateneo-DLSU on today

LA SALLE cheerleaders perform during the UAAP Opening at the Araneta Coliseum.

[illegible]

By Jasmine M. Payo

IT PAYS to proceed but defending champion Ilac Kaizens rallied it in nevertheless as the Tamaraws crushed the youthful University of the East Warriors, 89-61, yesterday at the start of the 67th UAAP senior basketball tournament at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Adamson University Falcons set the tone for the lopsided varsity results as they doubled the University of the Philippines Maroons, 68-34.

But a rout is not in the horizon when the league's toughest rivals, Ateneo and De La Salle, clash at 4p.m. today.

University of Santo Tomas and National University collide in the first minor match at 2 o'clock.

The Tamaraws, who clocked the Eagles with finals on hand, coast to the title playoffs last year, enjoyed a smooth cruise right from the tip-off, leading by as many as 29 points in the second half.

Derrick Mienda registered with 17 points and Arwind Santos and Ryan Arana followed in double digit as the Mosquiteers signed over who beat the rookie-laden Warriors with a 20-6 edge in fastbreak points.

"They have fresh legs, fresh arms but we were able to break their pace," said PEE coach Joe Silva, who also ranked the Tamaraws to the PBL Unity Cup contend.

Also scoring heavy tallies out Earl Ingua, def. combined for 23 points for the Warriors, new coached by rookie Cindy Resurreccion.

Leading the Tams' blowout were guards forward Richard Alonzo and main man Mark Abella, who finished with 12 points apiece in Adamson, scored its first season opening win since 1996.

"From where we are now, we are definitely better off. This is really big for us. We missed so Adriano in that game. I think Our coach showed that," said Falcons coach Luigi Trillo.

The stats:

Tamaraws (Ilac)

FB 18—Abrigo 17, Santos 14, Ingu 14, Evans 13, Chua 7, Tolentino 6, Mangahas 5, Garlitos 2, Perez 2, Salvo 2, Manuel 1, Adeleke 1, Arana 0, Rabanes 0.

SU 34—Abella 12, Sagarbarria 10, Lingcu 6, Amonsot 2, Lalagtit 2, Bachanyi 2, Tamayo 0, Adriano 0, Zulueta 0, Palaganas 0, Macapanas 0, Lapuz 0.

Quarters: 21-11, 42-22, 66-40, 89-61

Wanted: Big center for Hotdogs

By Jane Navarro

PURE FOODS is ready to offer the maximum salary for a dominant big man next is willing to trade some of the prized Hotdogs in exchange for a top center from other teams.

"We need somebody who can immediately start and match up with the league's other big men. We are ready to offer something nice, but so far there are no takers," said Nino Prado, the Purefoods representative to the PBA Board of Governors.

Prado admitted ongoing negotiations for a trade with at least two teams, he refused to identify, as he seems reserve said Purefoods, the doorman of the Jun Flores Conference, is ready to let go some of its prominent players in exchange for an effective center.

"We're not giving up. We are still under the salary cap and can open up our offer anytime," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio, who steered the Hotdogs to the 2002 PBA Governor's Cup title.

Reigning Kerby Raymundo and Jun Limpot, who are both left but long forwards, enjoy a maximum salary of P500,000 a month. They contracts will be renewed at the end of the year but they have to settle for a monthly compensation of P350,000, creating a money bargaining space for the team's P2.5 million salary cap.

Due to the financial crisis in the region, the PBA slashed the P900,000 player salary cap to P500,000 while the team cap, which went as high as P16 million, will further downside to P10 million beginning in the 2005-2006 PBA season.

Gregorio said the Hotdogs are prepared for their preparations for the regular season due to October to get his players back in game shape early and prepare them for the possibility of playing without a legitimate and imposing center.

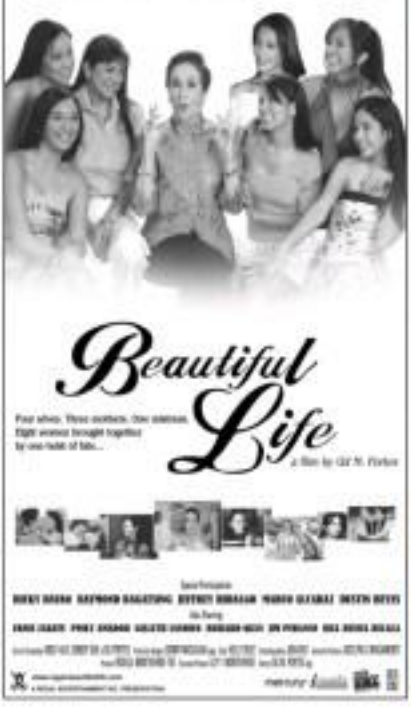
"That's why we are shopping around the courts, as we could prepare a contingency plan in case nothing happens," said Gregorio.

The Hotdogs once had Andy Seigle as their center but the 6-foot-8 dominator failed to create an impact for the team, and was shipped to Barangay Ginebra in a three-team trade that also involved Sta. Lucia Realty.

Gregorio got the 6-foot-8 Limpot out of the deal but it wasn't enough to satisfy the team's need for a dominant big man.

Injuries to key players and import troubles conspired to doom the Hotdogs to a 3-6th place finish in the semifinal Fiesta Conference. It was the third straight time the franchise, playing under the San Miguel Corporation umbrella, failed to get past the eliminations.

The Hotdogs finished with a 4-14 win-loss record after the elimination and were booted out by the Coca-Cola Tigers in the wildcard phase of the classic.



Time Gentleman leads Imports Stakes roster

By Edwin Villanueva, Contributor

A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD bay mare named Time Gentleman will be "partnerless" when she runs in the 2nd leg of the Philracom Imported Stakes today at the Santa Ana Park.

Time is because the fast-stepping galloper is the only one among the 1,900-meter race without a stable-mate in the seven-horse card.

Despite this, Time Gentleman is still expected to get the favorite's tag at post time against Mystic Express's Crystal Moon and Pacific Storm, Manny Biker Hanover and American Power, and Sandy Jones's Grand and Eleven.

"Baka mapagdesisyonan siya kailan, pero mainit-init ngayon magsimula. Pero siguro sa pangatlo ng sta. I need to join her a good start," said star jockey Jonathan Hernandez, who will be guiding the Bf Jester mare for the first time since winning her up in 4 karera recently.

Gamesay, to be handled by John Lucilore, said Crystal Moon, to be partnered by ace rider Pat Dilema, are tipped to crowd Time Gentleman for top honors on the strength of their impressive runs in the recent Philracom racing festivals.

Runner in the race gets P370,000 and owners are to the championship winner first four finishers. Key Ace of Patch Parrot and Best Lizard of Espanol are expected to lead the field.

Today's 12-race program will also be opened up by two other Philracom-backed races—the Santa Ana Park Arnedo and the Pinoy Racing Cup—to be decided over 1,400 m and 1,600 m, respectively.

OLYMPIC QUALIFIER: Tora Edwards runs in her 100-m quarterfinal heat at the US Olympic Team Trials. Edwards copped her heat in 11.16 seconds en route to Athens. AFP

Balico paces Open chess

HELSINKI—Air Force bet Antonio Balico drew with his usual Bill Moskowa Blaga after 27 moves of a Queen's Gambit Accepted to keep his solo lead after round 6 yesterday of the 2004 Pharmed Open Chess Championships semifinal round at the Wicket Hues shopping mall in Mandaluyong City.

"The position really demands. Richard to have coins," said Balico, who improved to 5.5 points.

Magat stayed on 5 points and shared 2nd to 6th players with Bill Petrosian Bass, Pilot Master Jean Noel Jules, HM Oliver Barbosa and HM Andrew Vasquez.

Boss beat FM Elmer Dimalanta after 71 moves of a Queen's Gambit Declined.

Jules whipped Rinoza Na after 56 moves of a Queen's Indian. Barbosa beat NM Rodolfo Dino Jr. and Vasquez drained FM Peter Bongalonta.

Wesley So and Bill Rolando Nobo split the point after 37 moves of a Sicilian game and were at 4.5 points.

In the women's division, 7th seed Daisy Rivera defeated WNM Anna Jalandoni in 61 moves of a Sicilian Defense-Maroi variation.

Top seed WNM Qyrienne Castellano and Faith Dimalanta settled for a draw after 44 moves of Pirc Defense to tally 5.5 points each.

AM Marilyn Bartolome

WFP president John Camacho (left front) presents a plaque to chair PCI Mike Arroyo. Arroyo left are Edwin Pleyrosa, Francis Chan, PSC chair Eric Buhain, Chan Caan, Tan Shi-Ling, Sen. Edgar Aglipay, David Yang and Michelle Jane Lucas-Lara.

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OPINION

[boilerplate]

Prerogatives

THE CATCHWORDS of the day seem to be "pleasure" and "prerogative." Cabinet members have been proclaiming that they "serve at the pleasure of the President," and those who are defending President Macapagal-Arroyo's latest appointments have been stressing that picking the members of the Cabinet is solely "the prerogative of the President."

EDITORIAL That the President is the only person who can appoint members of the Cabinet is not in question. That Cabinet members serve only for as long as the President pleases is also clear. The context, however, in which the powers of the chief executive are being discussed is all wrong.

The President has the sole choice to appoint whomever she wants, for however long she wants, in the Cabinet, but with this power comes something very basic: responsibility. Responsibility to the nation, as mandated by the laws, traditions and the best interests of the country.

The latitude given to the President then in hiring and firing is not absolute. It is contaminated by the law—for example, the law against nepotism—it is bound by tradition, and it is circumscribed by the President's duty to uphold the public good and not partisan political or economic interests.

To serve at the President's pleasure does not mean to serve merely to please the President. Cabinet members are extensions of the President, who is bound to rule not for private gain or personal happiness, but to accomplish the vast duties set forth in the oath of office. What the President is bound to do, Cabinet members are bound to do, and they cannot shirk that responsibility any more than the President can.

For the President to have certain prerogatives requires an explicit statement in the Constitution and under the laws. The prerogatives exist for a purpose—not the exaltation of the office above any other office, or its order to grant favors for the sake of aggrandizing it, but instead because they are necessary in order to accomplish the constitutional mandates of the office.

Any contrary opinion, whether explicit or implicit, smacks dangerously of royal absolutism, to which every democratic Filipino must be fiercely allergic. We have a president, not a king; we have a chief executive, not an emperor. Only kings and tyrants see things such as "I am the state," or Louis XIV of France on humanity post, or exercise their power of appointment in a contemptuous manner like when the Roman Emperor Caligula appointed his horse as a consul.

When officials proclaim that they serve at the pleasure of the President, they are espousing loyalty and recognition of their tailored-made position. They must not forget, however, that they too, are bound by laws, and tradition, and most of all, by the burden of public service and a conscientious accomplishment of the same. This is why Cabinet members can resign, and should resign, when their acts are fundamental questions of principle.

When officials maintain that the sole discretion in Cabinet appointments belongs to the President, they are stating a fact while ignoring the accompanying burden of ensuring that the process of selection, and the appointments themselves, serve a larger purpose for the public.

We repeat: to ignore these considerations is to ignore the very nature of the executive department, which is supposed to be public service.

There is, of course, the question of politics, since all presidents are politicians and in a democracy all actions are colored by political considerations. But there is good and bad politics. Political debts will be paid, and political requirements of a certain nature will always affect decision-making, but there is always a choice. That choice is between finding a union between the public good and partisan interests, or leaning the public good in order to accomplish fleeting political gains. This is what separates statesmen from politicians (not statesmen). The statesman has a broader vision which sacrifices political expediency for the public good—which ultimately leads to true political success.

The administration is now suffering from adverse public reaction to Cabinet changes made for political considerations. In other words, it has been harmed by its own bad politics. Had it practiced good politics—the politics of the public good—it would not have the problems it has now, or surely to its new term. But it has no one to blame but itself.

Poe's protest

SEPARATE OPINION

Satyanit A. Cruz

PERVADING Poe. It has every right to refuse to concede to President Macapagal-Arroyo. There is no constitutional or even only statutory obligation requiring such concession. Like any individual in the exercise of his freedom of expression, he may deny that his opponent won the presidential race this year.

As an ordinary citizen, and more so as the candidate who obtained the second highest number of votes in the recent election, Poe may challenge the proclamation of Mr. Arroyo as the winner. More than anyone else, he has the right to question the election of Congress granting the planter of victory to the now sitting President.

But such challenge must be based on legal grounds and not on the political issue that the masses supported him. He cannot simply argue that he was denied. His unreasonable stand during the proclamation meant was that Congress should not confine itself to the certificates of canvass but should also consider the precincts the moment it was. The majority was right in rejecting this demand.

The committee is not what are. SE, Sec. 4 of the Constitution provides. The clause contemplates a summary proceeding to be used by Congress in order to refuse adding another clause to tally all the votes reported in the certificates of canvass.

As long as such certificates are valid on their face, properly accomplished and without cancellations or alterations, or, worse, invalid by reason of non-inclusion in the provincial board of canvassers. Congress cannot go beyond these documents. It has no discretion to consider matters not reported in the certificates of canvass such as anomalies in the conduct of the campaign or in the voting and the counting of the votes.

This is plain from the language of Sec. 4, which says that "the Congress, upon determination of the authenticity and due execution [of such certificates] in the manner provided by law, [shall] canvass the votes." What it will ascertain only is the "authenticity and due execution" of the certificates of canvass, not their correctness.

Having done this, it will then add up all the votes reported for each candidate and declare as elected the person having the highest number of votes for President and Vice-President of the Philippines.

The validity of the votes reported by the certificates of canvass cannot under the jurisdiction of another body, to wit, the Presidential Electoral Tribunal. This is unlike the Supreme Court performing a special and exclusive function vested in it by Sec. 4. Provisions found in the Omnibus Election Code of the political election, such as the usual irregularities like vote-buying and intimidation are heard by the Tribunal and not other body.

In a board of canvassers, Congress has no competence to rule on the question not only because it is not granted by the Constitution. These are judicial matters that cannot be decided by speed-tallying or filibustering.

We may remember at this time the problem, and election of 1946, which many believe that F. Lacson won over the incumbent President El. pidio Quirino. Congress supposedly showed a tendency to favor the Liberal, but when the poll results in Lanao came in, Quirino emerged the unbelievable winner. This was because "the bullets and the ballots" reached the Canvassers' room. [illegible]

[illegible] Lacson [illegible] Quirino [illegible] Congress [illegible] Tribunal [illegible] Lacson [illegible] Quirino [illegible] Lacson [illegible] Quirino [illegible] Lacson [illegible] Quirino

Our Lady of Mount Carmel

RIVELLE

Raimundo J. Fernández

ON FRIDAY, July 16, we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Shrine of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, one of the loveliest churches in the Philippines located between Broadway and Victoria Streets, close to Aurora Boulevard in New Manila, Quezon City in subdivision which the house that Our Lady of Mt. Carmel built. For the last 20 years, the Shrine, just a few minutes away from our residence, has been the spiritual home of the family. I have attended all my wife Nenay who has been active in some of the parish organizations since when I was young. I would rather stay here and not in some distant community where one has to battle the traffic in order to reach the place. Incidentally, I have always been a firm believer in caregiving the shortest distance to the nearest church on All Saints's Day. We would save ourselves a lot of inconvenience and exasperation if—instead of all of us trouping to the cemetery on the same day—we go visit earlier or specific days that is DAYS and not necessarily visit the cemetery at the height of the rush hour. Then we would not have

Please send feedback to jsarmiento@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

TALK of the TOWN

Will GMA's 6 million jobs ease unemployment?

THE ABDUCTION of truck driver Angelo de la Cruz by Islamic militants fighting to oust foreign forces occupying Iraq highlights the great lengths to which Filipinos will go to find employment.

The militants have threatened to behead De la Cruz, a father of eight from Meycauayan, unless the Philippines withdraws its troops from Iraq.

Some 4,200 Filipinos are working in US military installations across Iraq. Many of them are mechanics and cooks. They are among the several million Filipinos working abroad because they could not find employment in their homeland.

As of April, the unemployment rate in the country stood at 13.7 percent and the underemployment rate at 18.5 percent, among the highest in the region.

In her inaugural address, President Macapagal-Arroyo said she was targeting the creation of 6 million to 10 million jobs during her second term of six years.

But a labor research group claims that generating six million jobs in six years will have more than six million unemployed and raise the unemployment rate to a high 14.5 percent.

Malacañang expresses confidence that it can generate more than six million jobs, saying that 1.9 million new jobs were created from April 2003 to April 2004 in light of the crowding political unstability.

It says that the jobs were created even without a full-blown economic reform program. The growing budget deficit and a mineral debt, however, may prevent Mrs Arroyo from achieving the higher end of her target of 10 million jobs.

The empress has no clothes

By Clarence Pascual
Senior Researcher, Labor Education and Research Network

FROM ex-President Marcos' pie-in-the-sky promise of 1 million jobs to the creation of 1 million jobs in the seven years. The unemployment rate has increased from 8.4 percent in 1998 to 13.7 percent in April 2004. Real wages have declined by 20 percent since 1998. Underemployment has increased from 17.5 percent in 1998 to 18.5 percent in April 2004.

Behind these seemingly impressive numbers lies a grim scenario. Counting 42 million jobs over six years still leaves more than six million Filipinos unemployed since the unemployment rate was high (14.5 percent) in 2010.

Here's some unpleasant arithmetic using official statistics. In the last three years, the working population rose by 3.9 million while the labor force expanded but percent. If we take the midpoint and assume that the labor force will grow 3.9 percent in the next six years, it will reach 43 million in 2010. Only 35 million today, an increase of eight million workers. But since only six million jobs will be generated (the lowest rich-debate estimate), 2 million unemployed (or 2 million workers will swell the ranks of the unemployed.

With four million unemployed today, this will bring the number to six million in 2010. Already, the official unemployment rate of 12 percent matches levels reached during the mid-1980s depression.

With its 10-point target, the Arroyo administration will double unemployment over eight years. Its better way have utilized a measurable target against which to judge her administration's performance in years' time, but the target itself is unacceptable to the nation at hand.

Superfluous jobs

Aiming for six million jobs over six years, or 1 million jobs a year, is another losing bold-not ambitious. The Arroyo administration has failed in its first three years when the economy created more than three million jobs. But the same period saw unemployment climb up to 4.3 million from 3.0 million. Over the 10 he's aiming to create, 4.3 million is not enough.

There is not to mention the poor quality of jobs generated—self-employment and part-time work in low-wage industries. Four out of 10 jobs generated in the last three years were self-employment or unpaid family work in low-wage industries. Four out of 10 jobs generated in the last three years were self-employment or unpaid family work in low-wage industries. Four out of 10 jobs generated in the last three years were self-employment or unpaid family work in low-wage industries.

Of the 10 jobs created were part-time work. Four of three created work for less than 200 hours a week. Three are looking for more hours employed for no more than 20 hours a week as there are absolutely unemployed workers.

Finally, six out of 10 jobs added were in the service sector and three in agriculture. The industrial sector contributed only one more job for every 10 service sector jobs (one from private households, wholesale and retail trade, and repair services, as well as transport, storage and communication). Although the latter industry, the bulk are transport workers—tricycle and pedicab drivers.

Population growth

Besides failing to raise the quality of employment, the government faces a major challenge in relation to job creation. High population growth has become a big burden to the economy. Every year, the working population grows by about 1.8 million people annually. The problem is compounded by the massive backlog in job creation accumulated over the last six years, despite major jobless economic growth during this period. The result is a rapidly growing labor force.

The challenge is to generate jobs, therefore, is how to improve the capacity of the economy to generate adequate quality employment. The issue goes beyond sustaining the income growth rate, which has had little impact on employment generation. Rather it is how to close the gap between economic growth and employment generation.

The disconnect between growth and job creation can be traced to the poor quality of growth. Economic growth has been concentrated in areas where job generation is limited and quality of employment is poor (agriculture, exports, and informal services). Economic reforms such as trade liberalization and the absence of an industrial strategy have undermined, rather job creation.

The administration has thrice a week to raise income rich. To make a dent on unemployment, it must create the high-end of its target range: 4 million to 10 million jobs in the next six years. Only then will it begin to make a difference.

That's a tall order. Based on past performance in the first three years, the economy must grow 6 to 7 percent each year in the next six years to generate 3 million to 10 million jobs. It has been expanding by 5 percent annually in the last six years. Further rates of increased growth in the past would require even more heroic efforts. Can it even hope to get ahead of the last 20 years.

Deficits and debt

At this 1.8-million clip, the only government seeking deeper into deficit and debt by the day. The unemployed have no jobs, which unemployment generated revenues to economic growth, therefore, is how will the current spending, like wealth redistribution, our fiscal woes have increased with the deterioration of growth from contraction and poor governance, with the economy growing in non-taxable sectors. Tax revenues relative to GDP eroded the revenue base. Growing with income revenues gains are now merely hungry as desert to the most modest needs.

Six million Filipinos have been promised with jobs over the next six years. But for workers on will lose, the outlook is bleak.

Not just GMA's, but everyone's work

By Rigoberto D. Tiglao
Presidential Chief of Staff

FIRST, let's get this out of the way. From April 2003 to April 2004, 1.9 million more jobs were created, according to the latest labor force survey.

If that rate can be maintained from April 2004 to April 2010, that would mean 11.4 million new jobs, a million more than President Macapagal-Arroyo's upper target of 10 million jobs. Isn't 6 million better than the slightly unrealistic one of 8 million Filipinos needing jobs by 2010. What "opposition intellectuals" in the Left-leaning Ibon Foundation and Research Network talking about?

Understanding what the opposition point is all about and what it is based on. Yes, I am the face of Mrs Arroyo's 28-point agenda is more important than enhancing phony antibureaucrat supremacy.

More urgent

First, it focuses how ultimate women are on building a better world of a republic as other one of its members. Having a livelihood is the most urgent need of five million unemployed Filipinos. Poverty alleviation cannot be through debt relief, but the right jobs.

Second, job creation is the outcome of practically all economic efforts. It is the reason why people like me

Job creation will be the outcome of taking everything that needs to be fixed in the economy in order to spur business investments and make even a relatively small, it is not government that can provide jobs. It is enterprises, from the biggest conglomerates to the smallest retailer.

Job creation is therefore achieving such things as keeping low inflation rates, maintaining a stable exchange rate, offering a regulatory framework that makes starting and operating a business relatively easy, making available to entrepreneurs, providing incentives and assistance, strengthening government finances, and empowering workers with the skills needed for employment.

Ms Arroyo's 10-point agenda is not a mere shopping list. Job creation is the end result of the entire 10 points. Implement Look so each goal and then one can still be job creation.

Clark and Subic

For instance, look at Goal No. 7, the development of Clark and Subic into the best international service and logistics centers in the region. That means taking advantage of Clark and Subic's infrastructure and location to make them an ideal stop for international service and logistics companies, which obviously would require thousands of new employees. Clark and Subic will also be favorites for the government's Centered Lanes, creating opportunities for farmers' children to seek new careers.

Universal education, Goal No. 3, obviously will result in providing the posters with the mental and skills exposure to get jobs. Note that the unemployed are mainly the unskilled. Of the five million Filipinos unemployed, nearly two-thirds did not complete high school or even elementary, according to the April 2004 labor force survey.

Even Goals 8, 9 and 10, or the political goals, will really lead to job creation automatically. Out of the electoral process, an end to insurgencies, and choice of the direction spawned by the Edsa people uprising.

Our country's big boom since 1903, when the Marcos regime started running, is that political stability and peace and order encouraged both domestic and foreign investments.

Waiting for something

Why have Malaysia and Thailand overtaken us?

Little noticed is given to the fact that from 1997 to 2000 Japanese business started its "following sun" move in which companies focused to turn and Japan instead to take advantage of the devalued yen. In sum, this migration of Japanese investments that was going the growth of Malaysia and Thailand.

But we missed that wave of Japanese investments because of the coup attempts and the Muslim-a kidnapping, which was allegedly perpetrated by the New People's Army (NPA). While George Montanos and the MNLF were looking to close troublesome Muslim areas in Mindanao, the country was saying goodbye to probably more than a potential million jobs a year.

Mindanao has only recently started a its agribusiness take off. It will then to foreign companies who and newspaper accounts of attacks by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and kidnappings by the Abu Sayyaf.

The insurgency of the electoral process remains removing the defacto unemployment between the existing and the coming of bad. So, an end to the communist and Moro insurgencies would be the same for business investment. Ending the wounds created by Edsa II will end destabilization phase and raise the economy into flattening an implementation of the full service job economic growth.

So, job creation is ultimately the result of sustained economic growth, and anyone can find the economic of 10 million jobs against the given national aversion (GDP) to grow by an annual rate, specific seven percent.

Hire

So why doubt the President simply declare something like a "747" goal, that is, a GNP growth of 7 percent every year over the next 7 years?

Because her government are not the ones that create jobs. It has but on the road jobs for all. After all, economic growth without providing jobs to members or most of the republic will render a only a republic of the rich and poor.

It represents a contradiction: that the poor cannot vote for the GNP to grow. There is such a thing as "jobless growth," a phenomenon some economists in the world and the Philippines in 1995.

Setting the provision of jobs as a primary goal requires this government find the ways and means to create them without distorting the economic structure and making capital investments uneconomic.

Road maintenance

For instance, the Presidents "Kalsada Kotse, Maganda Buhay," a road maintenance program, could have been undertaken by imposing heavier fuel or license rates and allowing tourists.

But with job creation as her priority, the President directed that the program be changed so an employment mechanism for the local political of our country-men. Estimates are that the Kalsada program created jobs for about 250,000 Filipinos. A mechanized design would have generated only 20,000 jobs.

Another example is the President's focus on the first two years on making available to assisting her only to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has also to micro-businesses, which has accounted for the bulk of employment. Her focus creates a different standard for the use of the bureaucracy.

The Development Bank of the Philippines has committed to find ways to provide SMEs with easier access to lending capital. Thus, there is the SBCP-newly unveiled program for SMEs as well show receivables as an exchange.

For to start, the Land Bank of the Philippines had provided about 70.5 billion to cooperatives, non-government organizations, and thrift banks for lending to small farmers, or those engaging a capital of P30,000 and below.

Loan for students

Even the Students' Loan Fund has a Survival Kredito Inc., a loan window for graduating students, is intended to secure jobs, as a college degree is a requirement for most jobs.

The jobs-creation program is based on a premise: a mindless search is not as overly ambitious proposals.

The past three years are various tested and tempered to simplify and streamline the governments, a total blown global of investor threat: ditch the Philippines as one of its targets, an issue-pointed hostile problem, and the world economy will be down.

Despite these difficulties, jobs created from January 2001 to January 2004 totaled 3.4 million, or an annual rate of 1.1 million. That's within shouting distance of the 800,000 government needs under the Estrada administration. The second year of job creation under Mr Estrada's three months already more 0.6 million jobs in one.

Paths!

The figure cited in the start of this piece, 1.9 million jobs created from April 2003 to April 2004, is encouraging. It also attests to political maturity needed. But this can was achieved without a full blown economic reform program. Imagine what could have been achieved without a full blown economic reform program. Imagine what could have been achieved without a full blown economic reform program.

The dominoes and unsteel clouds are indeed fine clearing. The other nine goals of the 10-point program will accelerate job creation, and Mr Arroyo will be undertaking her reform program unbuttoned by politics.

This job creation is not only the work of government. It requires efforts of Filipinos, to face a sense of responsibility to be achieved in the republic.

This is especially so for the elite. Does one really need the President Aquino 3.0 to run PSBO Ochoa's candidate against them? Shouldn't one just expand his forces, or set up a philanthropic partnership, or micro-financing facility for his employees?

Rather than ideologically motivated mourning and "that's impossible-to-achieve" cheering, why don't we all just buckle down and create jobs?

Across the NATION

Overprice seen in land sold for CARP

By Aris Ilaga
Visayan Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—The Commission on Human Rights in Negros Oriental has accused officials of the Department of Agrarian Reform, the Land Bank of the Philippines and one businessman of maliciously inflating the value of the 460 hectares of land acquired by the government in 2002 under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

A CHR report made by special investigator Jesse Calete revealed that the land traded in Sitio Manggahid, Barangay Imelda in Sta. Catalina was initially offered by the landowner to the government for P12 million, but was eventually bought for the government at P20 million allegedly because of the intervention of DAR and Landbank officials here.

The CHR, based on the Calete report, on Tuesday charged before the Office of the Ombudsman for the Visayas for violations of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act Ramon Pabre, retired Landbank appraiser Alfaro specialist lawyer Jesus Kalaminan, retired provincial appraiser Alfaro (Pinal) of Negros Oriental; Stephen Lumiday, incumbent provincial appraiser Alfaro; officer; lawyer Raphael Orillosa, former DAR legal officer; former Alfaro Sinco, former Dept. of Negros Oriental; Romeo Bendaniza, Pinalbo Quadro, Ismael Jopia, Belleven Macalo, Isidro Jordan and Nilo Lopez, all of the DAR provincial office; and businessman Edward Dy, who represented the landowners.

The charges were filed following the CHR investigation of the complaint of the DAR beneficiaries.

The CHR investigation showed that there was no reason for the price of the land to triple to make because the land is the hacienda—the 220 hectares of sugarcane and the 40 hectares of coconuts—did not exist when the DAR field inspectors visited the area in 1996.

The 240 farmer beneficiaries belonging to the Manggahid Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative had objected to the increased valuation of the land because they would end up paying for it over a 30-year period at six percent interest per annum.

The farmers had initially filed a complaint objecting to the increase in the land's value only to withdraw the complaint later on allegedly after the Landbank representatives warned that the complaint would only serve to increase the value of the land further, the CHR report said.

Gov't execs step into 'invasion' of rice terraces

AN ELDERLY Ifugao woman and a child are some of the beneficiaries of the entry of vegetable farms in Timo town.

BAGUIO CITY—Environment and agriculture officials here decided to intervene in the "invasion" of forests and ultimately the terraces in the Banaue-Ifugao town by Benguet-based vegetable farmers.

An earlier spot fire razing forests and ripping unattended canopies of the small tree terraces of Timo town, which is embedded in a watershed, could be with Benguet farmers from Buguias and Augusto Lagos, Cordillera Highland director for forestry.

The threat is slowly being eroded by Lagos' clash and burn operations) attributed to the surrounding farmers, he said.

But for Timo's fieldgrapevine, the most alarming phenomenon is the gradual conversion of the terraces into vegetable gardens.

The centuries-old terraces seen to be a biological design, which requires a watershed at the top of the mountains to constantly replenish the soils with irrigation water, according to studies made by the defunct Banaue Rice Terraces Task Force and by former Ifugao Gov. Teodoro Baguilat Jr.

But many such watersheds are being bulldozed by farmers for vegetable gardens.

Gov't road

Jaime Bacungan, Cordillera director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said the root of the current tension is a government road that was opened by the Department of Public Works and Highways from Buguias to Timo.

"Even without an environmental compliance certificate (he) would have enabled the to rid and environmental implications of such a road, DPWH proceeded to open a road through the boundaries of Mount Polay (national reservation), he said.

The DENR is also studying the impact of farm-to-market roads that were facilitated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Kalinga Labay in Kabugao (Apayao) in upland.

"We are not against development, but we must consider the ecological problems a road will bring. The government considers this a 'citizens' matter because there are Timo residents who benefit from the encroachment. They need the capital," Lagos said.

Timo's 11,000 residents rely on subsistence farms, most have confirmed the migration of the youth to urban areas like Baguio City and La Trinidad, Benguet.

Accessibility

A fifth-class municipality, Timo is one of the most distant towns in Ifugao, and the least accessible to the provincial government in Kiangan.

Barangay has deployed forest rangers to the farms, hoping to mitigate the destruction there.

But he said the DENR is relying on Benguet officials, who have scheduled dialogues with

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DOH declares gastroenteritis outbreak in 7 Pangasinan areas

[DAGUPAN, Pangasinan]—The Department of Health has declared an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis in six towns and a city in Pangasinan and health and government officials have been mapping out short and long-term programs to avoid more deaths from the disease.

DOH records showed that 1,886 people were stricken by acute gastroenteritis in 24 towns since the outbreak of the disease on May 31 in Malasiqui town.

Seventeen deaths have been reported, 15 of them were children.

The most number of patients came from San Carlos City (646), Malasiqui (484), Bayambang (318), Binalay (139), Calasiao (99), Mangaldan (69) and Mangaldan (56).

The number did not include patients admitted at the Regional Medical Center in Pangasinan (RMC) where hospital chief Anna Cesar said more than 500 patients were confined for gastroenteritis.

During a meeting called by Gov Victor Agbayani, local government officials said they should decide whether to declare a state of calamity in their areas.

Health officials, led by DOH Regional Director Eduardo Janiste, said towns would screen the affected villages and track residents to chlorinate their drinking water.

John Nee, a sanitary engineer, said chlorinating the drinking water is still the best and least expensive way to kill the virus causing bacteria. He cause of cholera disease which has victimized 66 persons in the province.

A P2 worth of chlorine to one tablespoon of chlorine granules can chlorinate 10 drums of drinking water, Nee said.

The other chief focus of DOH is to ensure consistency of drinking water quality in the province, including regular testing of all water sources such water refilling stations, distribution system of water districts and public deep wells.

The medium and long-term plans include the rehabilitation of deep wells in the barangays where sources of drinking water are shallow wells.

Rovilyn Cayabyab, spokesperson of the DOH, said most susceptible to the disease are residents of the towns which are located downstream of the lagoo, Sinocalan and Sual-Cayanga rivers. The said to these waters is salt water or easily toxic. Yolanda Sotto-Fuerles, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

PRAYER. An altar has been set up in front of the house in Mabini, Pampanga of original mother Angela de la Cruz, who has been taken hostage in Iraq. His townmates have been visiting the house to pray for his safe release.

Gov't urged to help revive dying prawn industry

By Felipe V. Calleo
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—Prawn producers in Ozon have sought the help of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to revive the "dying" prawn industry here.

Pontevedra Fishpond Owners and Operators Cooperative (PFOOC) president Melton Gamora said they want the BFAR to deliver on the commitment it made last year to provide P9.8 million worth of equipment for the prawn culture laboratory to be set up in Rodriguez, Cupiz.

The laboratory would help fishpond operators here determine the disease that has affected their prawn stocks, he said.

Gamora said several prawn producers have been diverted their operations to "Penaeid" (milkfish) culture because of the unknown disease that has been attacking their prawns.

"Because of the continuing decline in the prawn harvest, some of us can maintain while others chose new production instead. But even that trend is changing now also hit by the disease," he said.

Pontevedra used to obtained the second highest harvest of prawns in the province. Business was good for the past 10 years. The province, particularly Roxas City made its mark when it earned the title of "Seafood Capital of the Philippines."

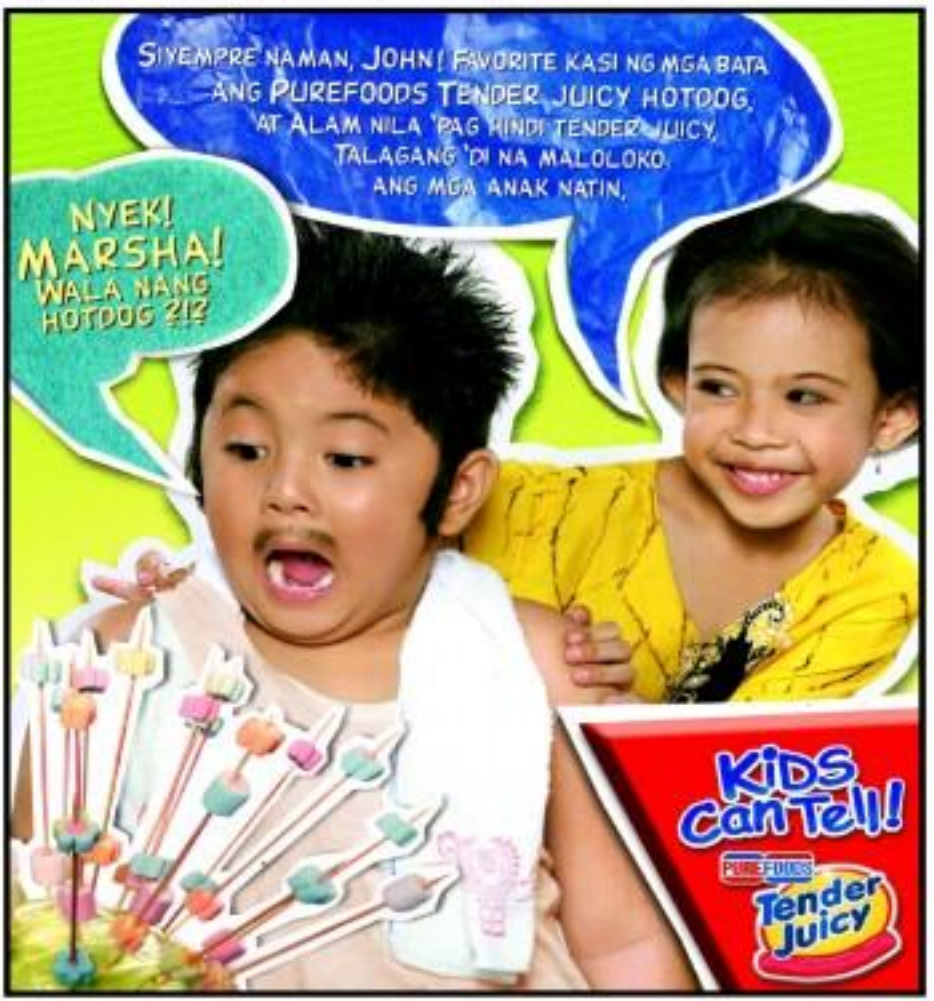
Gamora said target plans used to bequeath the province in kilopost prawns orders to Manila and to other parts of the country at present, however, there is hardly any order for prawn.

Aside last year, the local government of Pontevedra provided a building to house the laboratory equipment for prawn culture but was never provided by the BFAR.

But so far, only some P800,000 of the P4.5 million worth of equipment supposed to be installed in the laboratory had arrived.

Once completed, the laboratory could determine the kind of water-borne disease that hit the prawn and crab. The laboratory can be used not only by Cupiz fishpond operators but also to those from nearby provinces, Gamora said.

Pontevedra Mayor Arturo Tanco said he strongly supported the move of the fishpond operators to ask BFAR to fully equip the laboratory.



INQUIRER Mindanao

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The last of the Bagobo weavers

By Cresentina A. Lacerna
Reporter, Davao del Sur

THE WAY up to Barangay Binang in Bansalan, Davao del Sur, is one hell of a rodeo ride.

The flight necessitates gallops over potholes on the dirt road leading to the bamboo house of Salimbi Mistera, one of the country's seven national living treasures. The treasured artist's experience in the trade looked easy.

Apo Salima, 84, is among the last Bagobo weaver who, up to this day, continues to weave the traditional design of the Bagobo cloth called "inabal."

Her design can be traced back to as far as 500 years, says Ben Dale-Jawod anthropologist Cherry Galasan, one of the first people to find her to the remote barangay about eight decades ago.

But recently, the loom that used to clank with life had been facing unusual quietly now Apo Salima's machine unscathed.

She has been complaining of pains in the chest and stomach. She had been to the doctor in Bansalan City in North Cotabato once or twice, but still, she could barely squat and work her fingers into her loom during the past few days.

"Most already looking frail, she slowly descends on her loom square with folded breath.

Bagobo-Tagabawa

Named as one of 1994 Outstanding Bagobo artist, photographer Dong Mejudon's daughter tracked down Apo Salima's house, in search of the remnants of the traditional Bagobo weaving among 10 Apo's Bagobo-Tagabawa tribe.

She went to the last time to live with her, Bangkas recalled that the first question that popped up in the anthropologist's mind was: "Do you still have your tools with you?"

Apo Salima drew out her loom from a rush left to gather dust in one corner of her house. She had stopped weaving in the last 10 years, because of August of the prices her handwoven textiles used to fetch in the market.

"About textile that she used to weave for months would only sell at P50 in the market," Jean Bangkas said, recalling what the weaver told him then day.

Besides, she did not like the attitude of some buyers because they would hardly pay.

To bring her back in front of the loom, Quinto and Jean Bangkas drafted out some amount for Apo Salima.

Century-old design

What came out were the traditional "inabal" designs of the "kinuyas" that Quinto dated to be 100 years old. "It was the design handed over to her by her mother and her mother's mother before her," Bangkas said.

Apo Salima began weaving at the age of 12 and continued to do so even in this day.

While others have perished over thing now to the old designs. Apo Salima stuck to what her mother had once taught her. "She refused to be carried away by the new trends," Bangkas added.

Now, the other Cheap commercial weaving is threatening to wipe out this Bagobo weaving tradition.

The advent of machinery and weaving equipment, as most commonly sponsored by government, is threatening to gobble up what remains of the rising art that prompted the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) to name Apo Salima one of the country's national living treasures in 1998. She was cited for keeping alive the dying tradition of abaca weaving among the Bagobo.

The title carries for it a P25,000 monthly stipend so that she can spend the rest of her life weaving, says Bernard Horace Bangkas, NCCA coordinator in Southern Mindanao.

It also helps get the traditional Bagobo art in focus, as that Apo Salima's pieces remained on exhibit's pieces at the institute.

Once installed in her loom on the floor, she seemed to have turned into quite another person.

Ancient people

"So many weaving today except for this one," she says, as she picks up the bolt used to wrap around her waist. The band is connected to the loom and helps stretch the abaca fabric.

"Inabal" textiles are woven using the backstrap loom that only needs abaca and the weaver's back.

Her various wooden tools, she says, were crafted "by ancient people."

She deftly fingers the abaca weft and pounds them down with pieces of thumb of the "batten," one of the wooden tools installed centuries in her loom.

APO Salima displays her weaving skills.

The pounding makes the bamboo house shake each time, arousing to weave Apo Salima's heart and soul into the warp and weft of whatever fabric she is making.

Weaving, she says, takes much of one's time, energy and attention. It demands that one's concentration but her age could hamper it.

Tedious process

From choosing the kind of abaca fiber for the cloth, pounding to soften, and make it pliable, up to the long and tedious process of tie-dying to create the unique designs demand all the talent and attention of an artist. It usually takes her at least three and a half months to finish a three-meter piece of "inabal" clothing or about one "inabal" shirt a month.

Except for the loom near the window and the ill-aimed pictures on the wall that include one showing her at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, where she went among the Bagobo delegates to the Philippine Centennial Celebration in 1998, and another showing her accepting the nationwide living treasure award from then President Fidel Ramos and then NCCA chair Alice C. Lim, Apo Salima's bamboo house is bare.

Nothing else in the house suggests the work of the multi-talented artist, a weaver. Her creations are scattered, she says to the NCCA office for documentation, or to the museum for display. Some go to the hands of private collectors.

Only one left

"I never used to think about the weaving of names," she says that Saturday morning. That saturday, I suddenly realized that all the old weavers are gone. Well, I was weaving alone, the only one left to continue."

Then, the weaving of her name suddenly left her. "Salin," or fabric, could totally mean, "criminal" or "what remains" of the old Bagobo weavers.

Most grandchild Bagobos, she says, no longer took to weaving very seriously.

Her daughters have been to weave, she says, but abandoned it to attend to more pressing needs of weaving as living. "They're no longer interested, she sighs. "They'll rather do something less tedious done with it."

Among the few women learning the intricacies of weaving from her is Jean Bangkas granddaughter, who, she hopes, will carry on the old tradition.

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METRO

SENIOR NOT A TECHNOPHOBE

Oldest stude in computer class at 82

By Maryjoe C. Ortiz

RECORDS in cyber-math his computer and keeps himself abreast with new developments in technology.

Like everyone else, he has a cell phone and remembers a lot of text codes.

But Tomas Quinto is not a teenage digital freak.

He is an 82-year-old retired mechanical engineer who is proud to say that he is no technophobe.

Early interest

A native of Pangasinan and now a Makati City resident, Quinto had always been interested in new technology.

"As a person gets older, he is left behind by fast developing technology," Quinto said in an interview at Makati's Barangay Olympia multi-purpose center.

"We have to update our knowledge on new things to keep up with the current trends."

Radio and other loves

As a child, Quinto had diverse loves, interested in inventions and gadgets.

"Before, I only tinkered with the radio," he said, laughing softly. "It was my love for much later that I made it into an engineering course."

New challenges

After graduating from the Mapua Institute of Technology, Quinto put up his own engineering firm.

In his engineers, he was able to do the things he found as a young boy. But it was not until he retired in 1980 when he was faced with new challenges.

"I still kept myself busy by tutoring engineering students," he recalled. "But I soon found out that to be able to coach one to them, you also have to speak their language by learning the latest in technology like computers."

Quinto said he already knew about the growing importance of computers when he was still working.

Evolution

"I saw the evolution of the word processor from the manual to the electronic typewriter to the computer," Quinto said with a grin. "I regretted not having the time to learn about the essential role of computers earlier."

No hindrance

But age was not an obstacle for the engineer.

When the Makati City government began offering basic computer lessons as part of its program for senior citizens, Quinto grabbed the chance to equip himself with knowledge about the new machines in the work place.

2 GOING Quinto gets a better view of the world with the help of a personal computer or PC. At 82 years old, he has started to get acquainted with PCs through the help of a computer literacy program of the Makati City government.

"There were initial apprehensions, of course, because I thought people would laugh at my efforts," he said.

In January 2004, he signed up for lessons at the Barangay Telemedia computer center.

Reputation

Quinto soon earned a reputation as the oldest senior citizen taking up computer lessons at the city. In no time, he learned and mastered basic programs like Windows, Microsoft Word, Excel and Power point.

After a month, he already began using the computer to write his correspondence and help his grandchildren with their homework.

Not content

But Quinto is not satisfied with his newly acquired knowledge.

"It's not enough. I still want to learn how to use the Internet and email," he said.

More subjects

He also said he soon wants to enroll in a four-year course on computer science to learn about programming, if he will has the time.

"I want to know and master new software," Quinto said, adding that he loves to read periodicals and journals on engineering and technology in his free time.

"Time is never too old to learn," Quinto said.

For everyone

The 82-year-old stressed that technology is for everyone, including the older generation.

He also emphasized that seniors should not be scared of trying new things.

"Time is never too old to learn," Quinto said.

Police eye same suspects in slay of Armscor exec, retired cop

By Luige del Puerto

TWO RELIEVOS, one set of suspects.

Police investigating the murder last May 21 of Danilo dela Paz, an official of Armscor Corporation of the Philippines, said he could have been killed by the same suspects who ambushed former Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim's chief bodyguard Rolando Olarte in Quezon City on July 2.

"The arrested suspect in the Barsaoinan killing has positively identified one of the suspects in the Dela Paz killing," said Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., Kamuning City police director.

Rojas said alleged Barsaoinan enforcer Gerardo Santos, 26, tagged a certain Eduardo San Jose, alias Ed, as one of those who ambushed Dela Paz.

He said both of them (Santos and San Jose) came from Dr. Jose group based in Sjad and Bulacan," Rojas said. He was apparently referring to the alias Romeo Reyado (MBE), the liquidator accused of the Miss Bright's delay.

Santos, Rojas related, have already admitted to being an MWA member and claimed to have known that San Jose and a group of other men were out to do a "job" in Mindanao (Ed).

Pilmo Santos, head of the killing of Dela Paz in Barangay Sienna, he allegedly then knew that it was by the group of San Jose.

Last year, the military accused Rolando, a native of Bulacan, Rizal, and several men for illegal possession of firearms, explosives, ammunitions and war materials.

The Mendiola police sent an investigator to the Malabon Police last week to check whether Santos had any knowledge of the Dela Paz ambush.

The investigator showed Santos several pictures from which the suspect pointed out the photo of San Jose.

During the investigation, Santos—then about as a police report on a confirmed communist rebel—said they got orders "from high up" about Ram Gagelo, Rojas said.

"He said he was certain that San Jose was part of the group that ambushed Dela Paz. He also said most of the members of the group knew each other," the police chief said.

However, Rojas was not certain whether the group was operating on ideology or money.

"It is likely a gun-for-hire group. But we also know it is left leaning, so we don't know if ideology is involved here," Rojas said.

The police have alleged that Santos, who was initially accused for allegedly playing with a grenade in Malabon, was a member of the ASG.

Reconstruction was also carried out, ending through the Road as found a makeshift cell on E. Jose Street, Mercedes Subdivision in Bangkal about 6:30 p.m. on July 2 when some men using a tricycle approached and started firing his gun at the retired police chief.

Widower blames QC docs, nurses

By Tina Santos

FIVE doctors, three nurses and a technician of the Nicol Del Mar Medical Center (formerly the Quezon City Medical Center) have been charged with negligence before the Quezon City prosecutor's office for the death of a woman who gave birth at the hospital last year.

Charged each with homicide through negligence are Dr. Lilian Quintanado, Dr. Marjorie Lumbera, Dr. Lynnlee Arellano, Dr. Ruby Ann Dela Cruz, Dr. Cecile Buenaobra.

Also named respondents were nurses Marjorie Sanchez, Gwen Blanco and Rachel de Vera, and operating room technician Cornelio Mesarez.

In his complaint, Florendo Clave said that on Dec. 31, 2003, his wife, Marilyn, gave birth at the hospital through normal delivery.

The respondents reportedly conducted a bilateral tubal ligation on Marilyn after the delivery and died about 8:30 p.m. the following day.

Clave said that, per her autopsy, showed that Marilyn died of hypovolemic shock secondary to hemorrhage due to alleged negligence.

The respondents were unavailable for comment.

Flaunting illegal wealth giving corrupt execs away

From page A1

From stigma to strip [illegible] anarchy. How much the Filipino's perception of dishonesty in government has changed.

Blame it on years of entrenched and sophisticated plunder. They not only tolerate a "culture of graft and corruption," they even look up to those who get away with it, said Justice Secretary Simeon Gutierrez, director for legal and research at the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC). "People actually admire these kinds of officials. They are considered witty or smarter. This shouldn't be the case."

What's even worse, he lamented, was that most of these corrupt officials did not had a need to hide their ill-gotten wealth. They do not feel any shame. They prefer to display their loot. Their build palatial houses, drive flashy cars, buy expensive jewelry and go on trips abroad.

He said that "It starts with Rizal," a patent on corruption, Ricardo A. Conti, head of Media-Energy Transparency Group, wrote that it was the tendency to flaunt ill-gotten wealth that led unscrupulous officials to commit crime, prosecutors said graft campaign.

Simplicity cure

"It is naturally pointless for any body assuming a posture from corruption not to want to waive the fruits of his profits. It is instinctive sensation every sign of wealth but a badge of social acceptance and recognition," he said in the recent launch of his book.

"It is unthinkable for someone who has just been enriched to prefer simple living to a life of comfort. Simplicity as a preferential option is exceptionally rare in human nature," he added.

Ironically, this tendency to flaunt becomes the grafter's undoing. When a [illegible] doubts he is untouchable, it makes it easier for the government to catch him.

"The smell of corruption," he said, is in his book. Conti outlined the manners of corruption, the methods of corruption and included the list of agencies and civil society groups that have banded together with the government to fight graft.

How to detect crooks

The chapter on "Detection and Investigation of Corruption," listed ways to detect a crook in government.

"Notice carefully the signature watch, the diamond rings and the rings worn by the wife, the acquisition of a Rolls or Ferrari to the forbearer in the birth of an honest or honest in the business sect," he wrote. "Take note of the frequent foreign travels. Are the children studying in the most expensive schools? What about a cool house in Tagaytay or Los Baños. How are the birthdays celebrated? Is five-star hotels or at home with full catering service by a restaurant patronized by society elite?"

Since combating the [illegible] check programs last year, the government has suspended or dismissed about a dozen officials from the bureau of Internal Revenue, the Bureau of Customs and the Department of Public Works and Highways.

DENR exec in alleged extortion

By Lolo B. Sakaaria

FOR ALLEGEDLY demanding money recently from a parent of road war victims from the government's land reform program, a ranking environment official has landed in jail.

Arthur Balaoing, section chief of the District Management Services Region IV of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, was arrested by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation's Anti-Organized Crime Division (AOCD) on the complaint of a land victim.

P40,000 demanded

In a report, AOCD chief Jose Isidro Paz said Carmelita Cruz sought his help against Balaoing, who allegedly demanded P40,000 to exempt Cruz's property from the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

Land covered by Cruz are being tilled up and distributed to farmers.

In her complaint before the NBI, Cruz said she had received notice that her land was to be placed under the CARP.

She was surprised because a survey by the agriculture department and by a geodetic engineer both showed that her land had a slope of 28 percent, thereby exempting it from land reform. Land with a slope of 18 percent and above could not be considered agricultural, she reasoned.

Request for certification

Last month, Cruz requested the DENR Region IV to certify that her land had a slope exceeding 18 percent. She was later told that her request was endorsed to the Regional Technical Director for Forestry.

A week later, Balaoing talked to her over the phone and allegedly asked her for P40,000 which was later raised to P50,000 and Cruz negotiated to have it brought down to P40,000.

NBI agents nabbed Balaoing after he reportedly took marked money from Cruz during an entrapment operation.

The environmental official is detained at the NBI office in Manila.

How to spot a stolen vehicle

By Luigi del Puerto

BUSINESS EDITOR

Before check with the police five.

At least three cases of car theft and swindling in Marikina City this year could have been prevented if only prospective buyers called the police first.

"It's easy to know what lies on you are buying is stolen or not," said PO3 Joyce Abocejo of the city's anti-car theft unit.

The officer provided tips on how not to get duped into buying a stolen car. Sharing cars not only means you could lose it one day—you could be charged with car theft as well.

A buyer must first ask for proof of receipt as proof that the car was bought, such certificate of registration. If there are not provided, the buyer should think twice, added PO2 Orlando Aquino.

"The OR/CR tells you who the real owner is. Since these can be faked, you must verify the papers with the Land Transportation Office," he said.

Next, documents into say if the vehicle had been mortgaged. Check the bulletin with the bank, if the is the case. The OR is marked with the words "transferred" or "mortgaged."

Only then can the seller and the buyer ready the deed of sale. But no sale should be given if the time the officers warned.

"The next step is to go to the anti-car theft unit in Lamp Crame for a clearance," Abocejo said.

The process, called macro-etching, validates if the car had been stolen or had been involved in a crime.

"This is the most important step," Abocejo said, " because it saves you a lot of trouble later."

Beware of sellers who seem to get paid soon, a clear that a car good to be was most probably is not.

In May, a Marikina businessman was approached by a woman in a relatively new Honda CRV.

The couple befriended the businessman and borrowed P300,000 from him. When they could not pay, the couple offered the car and asked for P250,000.

Thinking it was a good bargain, the businessman readily agreed.

After canvassing fairs he was selling that car, the vehicle disappeared. The couple apparently had duplicate keys.

"A Honda CRV is worth more than P1 million. If anyone offers you a barely used car for much less, something is not right," Aquino said.

The officers said they have been on the lookout for the couple. The woman uses several names, including Tess Bobago, Ina Kabalin, and Tess Uy.

"She is about 35 years old, tall and fat, dresses well, and is quite beautiful," Abocejo said.

"If any one fits her description and the office you a sweet car deal, call us immediately," he added.

BUT WHERE'S PAPA?
A father takes his son and their puppy on a piggy back ride in Manila Bay as the weather took a summer turn. (RIA ONIA)

10 students reap early rewards of diligence

TWO DOZEN first Kinds of education come only when graduation?

At the Manila Science High School (MSHS), 10 sophomore students just received early rewards for doing well in their studies.

Recently, the 10 students received certificates of scholarship and modified Deeds to a P15,000 annual stipend, or P1,000 per month.

The stipend stand to reach P60,000 if they remain scholars up to their senior year.

Jessica Marie d. Tipon, Jessa E. Rosado, Stella Angel S. Bobiseis, Michaelle R. Cairo, Nikko Joseph C. Pit, Elton Mario B. Tanyag, Ace Micah P. Buenda, Chadwick B. Pascual, Arbu Dual E. Abad and Catherine P. Montes became the first beneficiaries of the MSHS Alumni Foundation Inc. (MSHSAFI) scholarship program.

School and foundation officials vowed to launched the program to help deserving students.

Councilor Jim Bagatsing, representing Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, presented the certificates to the scholars assisted by MSHS principal Rodel Bacnis and MSHSAFI president Dolores Hung.

Apart from the P120,000 annual stipend, each scholar is now covered by accidents in the amount of P50,000 courtesy of Philamlife.

The 10 scholars were chosen from 31 candidates based on a rating criteria which was composed of 24 percent general average, 24 percent grade in math, 24 percent grade in science, 24 percent gross income allowance per dependent and 4 percent extra curricular.

In his keynote speech, Bagatsing praised the MSHSAFI for its efforts in helping these students and their relatives.

"The opening of the Supersonic today is very important to that it shows the MSHS alumni has a firm commitment in helping the school and the students," Bagatsing, a 83-schooled education himself, said.

Beatriz needs your help

BEATRIZ

BEFORE her daughter was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML), Belen Lizarraga described 16-year-old daughter Beatriz as a young woman with a ready smile and big dreams.

Now, all she sees is a teenager trying to put up a brave front.

Last January, Beatriz's family learned how serious her condition was after the took a series of tests to find out what was causing her so much pain.

The Xavier showed that Bea had the normal symptoms of leukemia. Her blood test results indicated she needed an immediate blood transfusion because of a low blood count.

Further tests administered by her hematologist, Dr. Mitzi Bacho, confirmed that Bea was sick with AML.

AML, a cancer affecting the bone marrow and lymph nodes, dramatically weakens the immune system's cancer-fighting abilities. Beatriz will host via the from bleeding, infection, and organ failure within months if not carefully treated.

Bea had already undergone three chemotherapy sessions, but her condition has not improved. The doctors said tumor cells in her blood had increased, and recommended that she undergo a Bone Marrow Transplant.

But the Lizarraga found no match for Bea's donors in her three siblings.

In desperation, her mother read her luck with the National Marrow Donor Program, a nonprofit organization that facilitates blood stem cell transplants for patients who do not have a donor in the family.

Relatives were encouraged when the MNDP responded to Lt. Roche's letter saying there were eight potential donors for Bea.

But access to an MNDP donor meant Bea would have to be brought to an MNDP member transplant center. The closest to the Philippines are centers in Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, China and Hong Kong.

Choosing the Tzu Chi Foundation in Taiwan, the family then had to hurdle the new step: raising US $250,000 (approximately P13 million) to proceed with the transplant.

Belenes, who works at Banco de Oro as area head in Mandaluyong, has been on leave without pay for four months now to take care of Bea, the husband is a freelance insurance agent.

"The $250,000 and raising hospital bills amounting to P2 million are very beyond our means. Our income is just enough to support our basic needs," said Belenes.

A third year student at the Assumption College, Bea had already quit school because of her illness.

"She has been a model of excellence in academics, a leader in school activities and a loving daughter and sister," said Belenes.

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Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino
Sunday BIZ

From the shadows of the black market to the light of Tagaytay

OCBB graduated from the Ateneo High School in 1973.

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

SOS missions who performed to catch before the joyous, Ohsome Filipino businessmen Willy Ocier sure took part in major productions.

At 27, he became the chief operating officer of what was called the "Binondo Central Bank" or the black market for dollars, serving as the funnel between the government under former Trade Secretary Roberto S. Ongpin and the Binondo-based network of money-changers and currency traders.

The Binondo Central Bank referred to a group of major currency traders organized in November 1983 to provide badly needed dollars to importers, traders and large corporations, including San Miguel Corp., Nestlé Philippines and Procter & Gamble, that acquired raw materials and services from abroad.

These firms could not get the dollars from banks and financial institutions as these had no foreign reserves to due to the crippling debt crisis that followed the assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr.

Thus, it was in the mistakes, enmeshed network of Chinese-Filipino businessmen that the government turned to for help.

But not before rounding up eight of the biggest of these currency traders, including Ocier's father, and putting them in jail for currency speculation.

But the government was hard pressed to come up with the dollars, as the traders were released after they spent two weeks in Fort Bonifacio, and the Binondo Central Bank was organized under the iron hand of Ongpin.

"I was asked by my father to attend a meeting, initially as an interpreter. I was interested, so Bobby Ongpin as a fellow banker and eventually I was asked to be the go-between. I was like the CEO of the Binondo Central Bank," Ocier tells Sunbuddy.

Currency trading is a business Ocier knows intimately. Having been asked by his father to help out in the family business all through elementary and high school at Xavier School.

With that hands knowledge and his Economics degree from the Ateneo de Manila University, Ocier became the right man for the job.

The mandate of the so-called Binondo Central Bank was to close the gap between the official guiding rate for the US dollar and the black market rate.

The official guiding rate jumped from P8 to P14 after the Aquino assassination, but the black market rate went as high as P25 as investors panicked and dollar sources dried up fast.

"But through our network of small money changers from Binondo to Mindanao, we were able to come up with $7 million to $8 million a day. There was a quota system and we sold mostly to companies doing trade to make sure that the economy continued to move. These quotas were strictly followed and checked every day," he says.

The daily quotas ranged from $5,000 for small traders to roughly $500,000 for the bigger corporations.

Ocier supervised the sourcing and the selling of the dollars for two and a half years, or until the bank was disbanded on Feb. 28, 1986, right after the Edsa revolution that toppled the Marcos dictatorship.

Ocier is proud to say that through strict management and good business sense, the dollar rate was stood in at P22 by the time the Binondo Central Bank was disbanded.

FIRST JOB

WILLY with daughter Michel and parents in 1988

THE MUPPET Street gang is still all here after 35 years.

Not just about cute, furry toys

By Amy R. Roma

AFTER delighting preschoolers worldwide with Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Elmo and the rest of the gang, Sesame Street celebrates 35 years in the industry through innovation and education.

According to Maria Regan, vice president of the producer and international television distribution division of Sesame Workshop, this means reinforcing Sesame's position as an educational company by creating shows and initiatives that focus on education.

"Sesame is not just about cute, furry and cuddly toys but about real information. We're about research and using media to help children learn," says Regan.

Founded in 1968, Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization, which gave three generations of preschoolers in over 120 countries the legendary Sesame Street.

Dubbed as the longest street in the world, Sesame Street has, however, experienced a slowdown with the emergence of other cartoon shows and kid networks.

This is why Regan said Sesame has taken an aggressive step in the last two years to reintroduce Sesame Street to the public.

"We consider Sesame as multigenerational," says Regan. "After 35 years, we have to constantly innovate and invigorate our products to make them relevant to the new generation."

So one, Regan says, Sesame has continued to beef up shows for preschoolers, which is considered as the "bread and butter of who we are and what we do."

Innovations

In 2003, Sesame created 15 new design programs for preschoolers including Sesame Stories, an initiative that uses media to foster respect and understanding among children in the Middle East, and Kache Sesame, a pilot outreach program to promote literacy, gender equity and national awareness among young Afghans.

Throughout the years, Sesame has also introduced a number of localized characters.

More than the usual MPCs, these localized characters help children learn more about themselves and understand other cultures.

Aside from teaching preschoolers literacy, numeracy and social skills, Sesame Workshop also started addressing issues like conflict resolution, war and terrorism, race, ethnicity and even HIV and AIDS.

In May 2000, Sesame Workshop, through

Farmers make big bucks from rice seed production

By Kristina Roque
PIA Central Luzon (San)

SUBIC, Isabela—As early as 4 a.m., farmers line their bags of rice harvest before the chosen cooperative machine at the back of the office of a farmer's cooperative here. This is to clean the grains and transfer these to pre-sterilized bags.

They then soon rush to the cooperative's office to receive their payments for the sacks of palay they will have delivered.

They smile as they receive the documents that show the amount of money they will receive from a government agency in payment for their produce.

"Never before have our rice farmers been enticed so much in rice farming," says Felixed Aguanta, chair of the Subic Hybrid Seed Growers Multipurpose Cooperative. "It's because of growing needs of hybrid rice."

Aguanta, a dentist who has five hectares of land tilled for seed production, says there are now 300 seed growers here who are all members of the cooperative.

They are committed, through a memorandum agreement, with the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), to produce 442,000 kilograms of hybrid rice seeds during the production season this year.

Under the agreement, PhilRice buys the seeds for distribution at a subsidized price to rice farmers in different parts of the country who will be planting hybrid rice under the government's hybrid rice technology program.

In a guaranteed buying price of P7.00 a kg, the value of the seeds committed by the producers here is P27.600 million.

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Coop Chair Victoria Aguinta shows bags of processed hybrid rice seed produced by their farmer-members in Naxia, Isabela.

(PHOTO BY MARIA ANTONIA R.)

In hybrid seed production, a farmer can raise from 800 kg to more than 1,000 kg of seeds per hectare.

In the past, the hybrid seed growers here were making only a few thousand pesos from producing the common inbred rice varieties, Aguanta says. He adds a farmer would already be very lucky then if he would earn from P25,000 to P30,000 a hectare per cropping.

"In hybrid seed production, our seed growers here are earning from P70,000 to P80,000 a hectare or even more," Aguanta says.

Few takers

The production of hybrid rice seeds was introduced here by the PhilRice station in Nueva Ecija some time in 1999. But there were only a few farmers who accepted the seed-making chore.

"PhilRice then had to pay P18,000 per hectare as incentive to entice farmers to engage in hybrid rice seed production," Ferdinand Ventura, manager of the Naxia cooperative, says.

He says only 15 farmers agreed to join the project that covered seven hectares for seed production.

Ventura says the farmers' reluctance was understandable because hybrid rice production was new at that time.

He says as rice farmers were reluctant to adopt new technological breakers of hybrid rice would not work. In fact during, he says, only a farmer fails in one season, it will mean tremendous economic difficulties for him and his family.

Besides, he says, production of hybrid seeds is laborious, requires skill and cannot be done by a single farmer.

Farmers say in hybrid seed production, two genetically different parent plants are needed. These are the male (called the P1, P2 and P3 parental lines) and the female (called the 'A' parental line).

The male and female plants are transplanted days apart with rows of female plants in between rows of the male plants. These flowering should be synchronized and supplementary pollination activities are needed when wind velocity is not enough for cross pollination.

It is in the supplementary pollination activities in which more workers are needed. Then do it at the right time of the day by using bamboo sticks or ropes to make the plants move for the cross pollination. They do it for several days.

Other intensive work involves detecting "impure plants" detected in the production of pure hybrid seeds. This is the reason production of hybrid rice seeds is required to be isolated from areas used for production of other varieties.

The seeds produced, called F1, are used for commercial production. The grains produced as commercial production, though, may not be used as seed. But the seed planting as its harvest will drastically reduce. This is the reason farmers will always need new seeds every time they go into hybrid rice production.

University without walls

In 2001, Ventura says the initial 15 farmers who succeeded in the production of hybrid rice seeds were joined by 27 others. The new ones underwent on-the-job production also invested in 259 hectares.

"The intended training in one school called 'university without walls.' This means that production are trained under the shades of trees and near the fields where we had the garden-type demonstration areas," Ventura says.

Most farmers are now interesting in the seasons long rainy days being organized in the PhilRice, he said.

"They are convinced that there's big money in producing hybrid rice seeds," he said.

As of last year, the Naxia Hybrid Seed Growers Multipurpose Cooperative, formed in 2001, had an audited total resources of P10,377.3 million. These resources included the cooperative office and planted target for 2004.

The cooperative has put up a gasoline station called "hybrid gas station" along the national highway in Barangay Cembo here.

Aside from the gas station, the cooperative bought a 3.50-square meter lot, where a building and a shed for the storage of hybrid rice seeds were put up. It also bought a service van and a cargo truck.

"Our members have already put in a share capital of P1.059 million. These idea is to put on more shares for our cooperative to grow bigger. They are considering of giving shares to get loans but for their cooperative to become more inclined to engage in seed production activities," Ventura says.

He says about 60 percent of the group's members are filling one to four hectares with the rest from five to 10 hectares. Some members are engaged in corporate farming in at least 20 hectares, he adds.

The cooperative's members include private employees, retired government officials, doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers and former overseas workers.

Ramon Oliveros, a former overseas worker, says he found it more lucrative to engage in hybrid seed production than work as abroad. He is tending 10 hectares and drawes only eight months working in it.

"Another big satisfaction that our members get is the fact that our hybrid rice seeds are being distributed nationwide," Ventura says.

From the shadows . . .

Picture on page 3

of, four P25 at the height of the crisis.

"We were able to hold the line steady for almost two and a half years, and I would like to think that our group was able to save the peso, up by providing the dollars when it needed it," he says.

Next boom

When currency controls were lifted shortly after the Edsa revolution, the black market faded from the picture and it was on to the next boom industry: the dollar.

He found it in the stock market, which received part in record highs in the late '80s on the strength of local and foreign investor euphoria following the installation of Corazon Aquino into power.

Ortiz founded the stock trading room in 1976 when his father bought a seat at the Makati Stock Exchange and set up Ramon Securities.

He was taking over the fledgling entities at the De La Salle University and he remembers working at the trading floor in the morning, then commuting to DLSU in the afternoon.

"I would wear my polo barong to office so nobody would see. Then straight from watching at the trading floor, either shooting or taking orders from clients," he says.

He describes the stock market as very chaotic but exhilarating.

"It was like Wall Street," he says, "at the mainstream business world, trading for stocks in the oil and mining sectors.

He eventually moved to the Amex, while continuing his involvement in stock trading. By the mid- Ortiz would close investment deals, including the purchase of a property in Tagaytay for a joint venture with retail magnate Henry Sy Sr.

Ortiz says it was Sy who opened his eyes to the fact that Tagaytay would become the major recreation area of Metro Manila, because of its proximity and cool weather. It was also ideally located between the major ports of Manila and Batangas.

With that in mind, he bought a 300-hectare property in Tagaytay for P50 per square meter or about P14 million.

He went in and put up a 9-person management on P6.4 million, with no concrete idea of what he would do with the property. All he knew was that he would develop it into a major residential and recreation area.

"So I went to SM. Sy and offered to work together on the property with him, but he declined after seeing it because it was very hilly. He said we would only be able to plant pineapples," Ortiz says.

Thinking there was no way to go for him but forward because he was already committed with a P5.4-million downpayment, he went to his father to borrow the rest of the money he needed to purchase the property.

He then looked for an alternative investor and found himself doubling up on the door of an old colleague, Roberto V. Ongpin, who has moved to investment banking.

Although that with a huge project like this, who else could go for it but Ongpin. So I knocked on his door and told that I have this property I invested in develop," he says.

Ongpin then took over the entire ownership and took me on my first helicopter ride around the property. He took a look at it and by that afternoon, we had a deal," he says.

That deal led to the development of Tagaytay Highlands, the country's premier playground for the rich and famous.

Despite the magnitude of the project, Ortiz remained largely in the background, leaving Ongpin to take the spotlight.

Falling out

Ortiz was only forced to move to open in 1999 when he and Ongpin had a falling out over the way Subic Dairy, whose main asset was Tagaytay Highlands, should be run.

He found the hindsight uncomfortable but he had to take up the cudgels for the company to save it from being crushed under the weight of its debt burden, which grew to as high as P6.5 billion.

It has been five years since then and Ortiz, Bello who chair and Tagaytay Highlands president, says Bello's debt has been streamlined to P1 billion, thanks to the sale of 30 to a major investor. And Bello is on the way to better financial days.

Ortiz has set his sights on continuing the development of Tagaytay Highlands, transforming more raw land into properties and products, which would come to over a hundred.

"My mission is to make sure that Bello sweeps out of the hole and starts it prosper, and in the process, make money for our shareholders," he says.

Doing so means taking his turn at corner stage. But at 48, he is already getting the hang of it.

As he says, it is exciting to be out in the open after all.

WILLY Ortiz with Henry Sy Sr., whose he describes as like a father to him

Targeting a mature market

THE AYALA Land Inc. recently launched a new development that targets a more mature market.

"These are families with grown children, in high school or college, as well as empty-nesters," Jose Juan Jugo, division manager of the Residential Buildings Group of ALI, explained.

The proximity to prestigious schools, a mere five-set medical facility, popular shopping and dining destinations, and bustling commercial and business centers, makes it an ideal location for our target market."

The single-detached units also offer spacious spaces, comfort, and privacy especially for families with grown-up kids."

"The Legacy" is the latest development within Multicentury Place, a gated community of contemporary located along E. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue at the heart of Quezon City.

With just 71 units composed mostly of single-detached homes, it occupies 2.3 hectares of the 7.3 ha prime real estate property acquired by Ayala Land in 2000 when Philippine Fleet and Metro, the Filinvest assembly plant, used to be. It is conveniently located just minutes away from Manila, Greenhills, and the Ortigas area.

"The Legacy is the jewel of Montgomery Place," said Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) executive vice president of Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) said during the launch. "Most developments go high-rise these days and there are few places that offer house and lots. This is what sets us apart."

The Legacy's lot sizes measure about 315 to 268 sq. m. with floor areas ranging from 206 to 257 sq. m. "The architecture, known as Cuscion architecture, was inspired by the traditional houses found in the American South, in Georgia and Florida," Marina "Tati" de Guzman Jr., the architect of "The Legacy" explained.

"It's a characterized by high-pitched roofs, high ceilings, and tall windows. The strength of the design is in our use of the split-level concept which delivers far more rooms and space for the living area."

Two of the country's top interior designers firms were tapped to do the interiors of two model units.

The owners, Joy and Cynthia, of decor & Co. and Cynthia Co. Interiors, which they described as modern-minded classic."

"The model units are vital investments of the development to give prospective owners an idea of the best layout and design solutions for their future home," Cynthia explained.

"Since many of our buyers are Filipino Overseas, we also look certain living area concepts into consideration," Jugo revealed.

"The units were generally laid out to follow the Asian Feng Shui orientation or prosperity. Also, the Legacy's proximity to Multicentury Place also offers a host of amenities in The Pavilion featuring a pavilion ideal for intimate gatherings, an open courtyard ostensible for chit and chitchatting, and a tranquility pool for relaxation.

The development includes 24-hour security, underground utilities, ecological facility, back-up deep well and water reservoir, and continued property management by Ayala Property Management Corp.

For inquiries, call 848-5000 or visit www.ayalaland.com.ph. Model units are available for viewing on the along E. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue, Quezon City.

Not just about . . .

Picture on page 3

Margaret Mead Heritage Insight, conducted a study entitled, "A View from the Middle: Life through the Eyes of Children in Middle Childhood."

The study inquired into the lives of 6- to 11-year olds, an age group used to be poorly researched by educational studies. Either they are too old for Sesame Street or too young for vacuum-filled competing networks.

Insights considered this research as the first such research existing media to address these children's developmental and ethics-related needs."

A year after, a second phase of the study was conducted, investigating the effects of the 9/11 bombing to children. The study revealed children's insights, real and potential fears and how they want their parents to address these issues.

Recently, Sesame introduced Sesame Beginnings, specifically designed "to provide parents with the tools to recognize and address important stages of a baby's development."

Sesame Beginnings offers research-based information and encourages a "whole infant" development as Sesame Street, whereas preschoolers with a "whole child" curriculum.

Sesame also took on health issues with the launch of "Healthy Habits for Life," which provides preschoolers with ways to understand and recognize the importance of keeping sound healthy.

Began says Sesame is looking at current trends. For instance, Sesame will soon include on-line sport as it shows more that's what kids are into these days.

Southeast Asia projects

While Sesame is cobbling together Southeast Asia as a whole, Began says it doesn't mean there's saying, "one size fits all."

"It's really understanding what the Filipino family or each country for that matter, is looking for in a show," says Began.

What they do, according to her, is to provide the content for the show and if needed, have their local company partners localize it to suit the market.

One of Sesame's projects here in Southeast Asia, according to Began, is creating a stronger English language learning initiative thru television and other forms of media since "children get information from so many sources."

Began adds that they are looking at providing content to mobile phones. For the past few years, the market for cellular phones has become younger.

"Those kinds of interactives are simple but unquestionably becomes a part of our lives even if you're not a child," says Began.

"The credibility that Sesame represents gives parents of preschoolers the peace of mind to bring Sesame into the life of their kids and that's what we're trying to provide them," says Began.

She added, "What we do is special and unique; we don't preach nor are we condescending. In fact, we're engaging and I think people are looking to us for that once again even after 35 years."

WILLY in the loft at 17

THE proud Papa with daughter, 1989

High-tech vehicles to drive automotive chip demand

TOKYO—Take a spin in Toyota Motor Corp.'s Prius hybrid sedan and you'll get an idea of why Japan's chip makers see a huge growth opportunity in the auto industry.

The Prius is powered partly by an electric motor that complements its gasoline engine. Semiconductors control the electric motor.

As electronics become the main driver of car innovation, chip makers will be among the top beneficiaries, analysts say.

"Because penetration of electronics in cars is still quite low, we expect to see growth (in chip demand) coming from further penetration," said Mike Williams, research vice president at Gartner.

Global automotive chip demand is expected to double to $24.5 billion by 2008, outpacing the 68 percent growth in the overall chip market, according to research firm iSuppli.

Automotive chips already range widely from microcontroller units that help boost energy efficiency to system chips that read fingerprints for keyless engine starts, and to sensor chips for climate control.

Analysts say there is much room left for further chip-led innovation in automobiles.

"Electronics is where car makers can really start to do innovation and they can differentiate their cars from competition," said Drue Freeman, vice president of global automotive marketing and sales at Philips Semiconductors, a unit of Philips Electronics.

"Also, the use of more electronics and semiconductors will actually help reduce the costs that car makers have to spend in building cars (by eliminating mechanical parts)."

The niche potential isn't lost on chip makers.

In announcing its decision to sell part of its power chip operations to Mitsubishi Electric Corp., Toshiba Corp., the world's fifth-largest chip maker, said last month the deal would exclude products for automotive use, underlining strong growth potential of auto-related semiconductors.

"Car technology ultimately heads towards automatic driving.

Technologies will be developed for that end. Supporting those technologies will be, of course, semiconductors," iSuppli Japan president Yoshihisa Toyosaki said.

TAKEO Fukui, president of Japan's auto maker Honda Motor, introduces its new minivan "Edix" featuring six independent seats in two rows of three during a press preview in Tokyo. Honda will put the minivan with a 1.7-liter and a 2-liter engine on its domestic market priced between 1.7 million yen ($15,700) to 2.1 million yen ($19,400). AFP

Besides power chips, which can be used to control hybrid car motors, image sensor chips are expected to meet strong demand as they help car makers offer cutting-edge safety features.

Image sensors, which are used widely in camera phones and digital cameras, can be embedded on the surface of automobiles to monitor the moves of vehicles around them and override drivers' steering, if necessary, to avoid a crash.

They can also observe the facial expression of a driver. If they find signs of drowsiness, such as frequent blinks, an alarm would go off to give the driver a warning.

"As people seek enhanced safety and comfort, five to 10 image sensors are likely to go into a car in the future," Sharp Corp. spokesperson Tetsuya Igarashi said. Sharp is the world's largest maker of camera modules for mobile phones.

"We have high hopes that autos will form a new market for image sensors just like cellphones did." If 10 image sensors find their way into a car, automotive demand for image sensors could be as big as the $1.6 billion market for image sensor chips used in cell phones since automobile shipments are roughly one-tenth of mobile phone shipments.

Far-reaching effect

Having a lineup of automotive chips, which are required to function properly even in adverse conditions such as extreme heat, could also provide a favourable ripple effect for chip makers.

"If your chips are used in cars, especially in the critical area of engine control, that boosts the credibility of your products among all kinds of customers," said Minoru Matsuda, general manager of automotive systems at NEC Electronics Corp., the world's eighth-largest chip maker.

Even semiconductor equipment companies are getting into the act. Advantest Corp., the world's largest maker of testers for memory chips, is building machines that test automobile-use semiconductors to help diversify its business.

Advantest estimates that the number of chips used in a car will double by 2008. A typical passenger car today uses 50 to 70 microcontroller units. The number goes beyond 100 for a luxury sedan.

Rivals in the tester industry such as US-based Teradyne Inc. and Yokogawa Electric Corp. have also positioned themselves to capitalize on this trend.

"The automobile will continue to deliver steady incremental growth, which is not something we can say about the PC," said Advantest president Toshio Maruyama in a recent interview, referring to the volatile nature of memory chip demand.

Advantest expects revenues from its testers for automobile-use chips to nearly double to 2.4 billion yen ($22 million) in the current business year to March 2005 although that is still a small portion of its group sales of about 250 billion yen. *Reuters*

EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO THE PHILIPPINES

Small Projects Facility: Call for Proposals 2004
DELPHIL/SPF/2004/002

The Delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines is seeking proposals for small projects in the Philippines, to receive financial assistance from the EC-Philippines Economic Cooperation Small Projects Facility programme of the European Communities.

The full Guidelines for Applicants are available at the **Delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines, 104 Paseo de Roxas cr. Perea st, Legaspi Village, Makati City, 1200 Metro Manila**, and on the following internet site: **http://www.delphil.cec.eu.int/**

The first deadline for submission of proposals is **03 September 2004 at 16:00** and the second is **03 January 2005, at 16:00**

The overall objective of the SPF is to support the on-going reform and modernization of the Philippines economy and systems of corporate governance, by facilitating 1: interaction of European and Filipino civil society including the Private sector; 2: the networking of its policy makers and opinion formers, and 3: linkages among Filipino and EU operators in Business, the media and think-tanks.

The programme purpose is to provide a flexible and responsive tool to link policy objectives and EU's economic co-operation activities in Philippines in order to support small, innovative and visible projects in areas of strategic importance and mutual interest for Philippines and the EU.

Only Philippine-based Not-for-Profit Organizations (governmental or non-governmental organizations, local authorities, business associations, universities, research institutes, think tanks, etc.) are eligible for funding under this facility.

The current call for proposal will focus on the following priority areas:

1) Good governance, accountability mechanisms, and civil society participation
- Involvement of civil society organizations in planning and budgeting processes in local, provincial, regional and central government.
- Budget analyses and alternative budgets, local and national, from civil society perspectives (ex.: pro-poor, gender, children, the environment)
- Setting up e-government structures
- Public finance reform in local and provincial government
- Millennium Development Goals monitoring mechanisms in Local Government.

2) Regional economic integration
- Opportunities and challenges in ASEAN integration and globalization, in particular trade and investment relations with Europe
- Private sector and civil society involvement in regional trade and investment decision-making processes (national and ASEAN level)

3) Corporate governance
- Exchange of best practices between EU and Philippines in the area of corporate governance

Priority will be given to proposals which focus on the themes listed above.

All projects must feature a European dimension, such as:
- Partnerships with European organizations
- Activities to increase commercial exchanges between Europe and the Philippines
- Civil society dialogue between Philippines and Europe
- Networking between Filipino and European private sector
- Dissemination of European experience and best practices in the priority areas, through media products or exchanges.
- Promotion of European technology and/or know-how.
- Use of European expertise for capacity-building activities

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Sunday LIFESTYLE

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Editor Chelo Batoll-Fortuno

Playroom for healing

Text by Constantino C. Tejero
Photos by Rony Hontiveros

PAYATAS 14 crossing in Batasgrove, Bacoor, was founded on the kindness of strangers. It sprouts on a 2.5-hectare lot donated by Mowics.

All structures and built here were built from donations—cyclone outbreaks and corporations. The main room, for instance, was sponsored by singer-composer Jose Mari Chan, the meditation room by Ayala Corp.

Constructed for 300 million, with a capacity of 200, the Jimmy Reis Children's Village has six cottage shelters, a kindergarten, a home nursing area, an organic farm and poultry, an administrative building with offices, dormitories, clinics and recreation halls.

Architect Ming Encarnacion Tirol feels overall design is imposing yet blends well with the environment. The eclectic three-story structure, even the tiled pathways and colonial playground, adapts to the undulations of the rolling landscape.

From the look of it, so epic and spirit, one wouldn't associate the place with violence and dark stories. But here are housed 99 victims of physical and sexual abuse.

Inaugurated in November last year, the village is still unfinished. More donations are needed to put the finishing touches to the landscape architecture, construct a swimming pool, and add four more cottage shelters.

PLEASE TURN TO

Playroom for healing

GINA Lopez and Fr. Efren Barrozo entertain the kids at the blessing ceremony.

IMPOSING architectural design adapts to the undulations of the landscape.

KITE-LIKE adornments vividly characterize the exterior of the child.

THE MEDITATION room

The newest addition to the toddler's playrooms, a project the Lifestyle Network undertook to celebrate its fifth anniversary.

Designed by architect Pepe Lanchico, it is a soothing, asymmetrical, 60-sq.m. room with curve flooring, walls and ceiling painted a soft yellow, and curtains of yellow also as garnet entering in the breeze.

Cool and stimulating

Arranged on the sides are 10 chairs, a table and shelves of playthings all the fun-attract pieces are of nature.

There's a playhouse of pink sheer fluvial draping in the middle of the room, and a tent of blue cotton gauze in one corner. The toddlers play under these dreamy canopies.

"This is not really a playroom but a therapy room for ages 5 and below," says Lanchico. "Para tumutok sila, para maayos sila, and therapy should be positive. So we have pink, yellow, blue—but none of the shade that's the actual color—cool, relaxing...but at the same time stimulating, para hindi sila makatulog."

The room's sections are designed for one-on-one or group therapy of pre-kinder-garten kids. Though only 11 actual the sessions, the whole area is meant for 20.

"They spend 1-2 hours in the morning here, that's why I make use of the sunlight," continues Lanchico. "It is a morning room, so hindi ko cubage hinaga ang yellow [painting of the walls and ceiling]. We consulted the psychologist on this."

A graduate of the University of the Philippines, Lanchico has been used to designing buildings, houses, stores and restaurants, yet this little room still posed a challenge.

"This used to be a space room with a sweet shape," she says. "Gagamitin ito ang kapaligiran [that setting]. Sa architecture po eh, and not just a job for an interior designer."

She designed the place in one day. She executed it in a week.

Natural and organic

Another challenge was to realize the concept based on the philosophy of German educator Rudolf Steiner and his study of spirituality and anthroposophy. The Waldorf-Steiner method is being used in the education of these children.

"The parameters is that, we can only use natural and organic materials," says Lanchico. "No plastic as much as possible."

Thus, the furnishings of wood, mats and baskets of natural materials, ceramic pieces, soft rugs and pillows and soft cloth draping.

"I chose the playthings," she continues. "These are therapy dolls of cotton, such as bees, so the children would just learn to imagine how they'd look."

Even the playhouse is imaginary. With no defined features, it's just a strip of clothing draped pyramidically on a wooden frame.

"They will just have to use their imagination," she says. "It can be turned into a kitchen, a bathroom, sala or dining area—kung saan sa gusto ang anak, nasa ang kama. I took the suggestion and guidance from these therapists."

Donations came from Cardinal Builders, Ace Paints, Avanade Collection, Nanette Ramos [sewing the fabrics and dolls], Jo Miranda [quotes] and Patrick Delaughe [wood for the furniture].

The room was inaugurated two weeks ago. At the end of the blessing performed by Fr. Efren Barrozo, the toddlers had fun taking turns with the body twig in sprinkling holy water around and at one another's chairs.

Chinky de Jesus, managing director of Creative Programs Inc., welcomed the guests. Gina Lopez, managing director of ABS-CBN Foundation Inc., thanked donors and sponsors.

It is hoped that the place would be an ideal healing environment where the children can just be, and relish the joys of the child-hood they have been deprived of in the outside world.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

MARVEL. Bertana gives pride pick.

FAP AWARDS

Oscar glamor—and some tumor

Text by Abe T. Vergara
Photos by Rudy Esparza

THERE may be a dearth of good Filipino films, but there's no dearth of glamour fashion among the industry's leading ladies.

If the recent Film Academy of the Philippines awards is any indication, the local fashion scene is very much alive and thriving.

It was the night of leading ladies and some unfortunate fashion villains

It won't be easy to do an Oscar, so, FAP by limiting the number of stars wearing the best gowns to five, but here goes: Gretchen Barretto in an Avrex Pepe Fernandez in a Rudy Ortiz, Ina Calinawan in a Philton Ramos Tiaoqui Manuel Luna in a Lanvy Espinosa and Cherie Gil in no-by Custro.

Gretchen won glamour personified in an ivory gown in Mikaela silk.

Behind, it was a classic and classy princess cut number with a back extension and a pair of butterfly sleeves that the brilliant Ortiz cleverly executed. In lieu of headwork, he accented them with strips of lace-cut fabrics, one side of which suggested a stylized tentacle.

It was a three-way collaboration with Patrick Rosas doing Gretchen's flawless hair and makeup and the most herself stepping on the bodies, layering her jewelry this time to a pair of drop earrings, a bracelet and a few hair accents. When you're as lovely as Gretchen, you don't need much more.

Pops was also eye-candy to a figure-flattering hot pink chiffon dress with a multi-layered skirt and two-toned

CONTINUED TO

Doing a Joan Rivers at the Pinoy Oscars

THE GLITZ and glamour of the local movie industry has finally gotten its own-day awakening. Even with two-year controversy. But the much-touted awards night would not happen due to internal problems (what's show biz without one). But minus backbiting, the 22nd Annual Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) Awards Night did push through with an extravagant event that elevated the industry's stature.

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

For the first time, the FAP featured the commanding achievements in filmmaking and the brilliant performances of the actors on the silver screen with not just the trophy but also a spectacular program. It started with a "Walk of Fame" where the stars and the red carpet with, then the awards itself in the CCP with an orchestra composed by the Radio Philippines Tanghalang Pilipino and Philharmonic Orchestra. And to top the prestigious celebration, the 1st Director's Guild was held in cooperation with the Philippine Tatler.

At Joan Rivers-Joan her notable evening of the Hollywood stars, the FAP had its version with the impossible hosting of Ben Abundia. With a shrieky move by an Hiroshi program actor Albert Martinez, he added zest to the friends that crossed him to the celebrities' walk down the red carpet. The head of security must have smiled half the footage with the screwed reporter boy and I had with the show-biz world, especially with the star-struck actors and the starlets with breasts that don't quickly. Wanda Seeto, Myrtle with her gold-thigh-high platform boots and matching hair color, which was in desperate need of an Brazilian. Hmm, makeovers, get my vote for Most Outrageous (or is that like the straw calling the kettle black?).

My Hiroshi-inspired (or African-looking) Hale Lanyard ensemble was so much less Hiroshi black and gold pool-robes outfit for the Most Original Award. I mean give her credit though for bravely walking down the ramp without tripping.

CONTINUED TO

LORNA and Ruffa Gutierrez with Tito Yap and Ina Princess

Oscar glamor—and some tumor

From page B1

pleated silk inserts. Gwen kept the focal work at bay by confining it to the butterfly sleeves and part of the bodice.

Also, unlike Gretchen, Pops wasn't in as the bee in her choice of jewelry. She could have done without the spicy brooches, so the set of Bulgari bling-bling was enough.

At last, pretty Ate Celandic has her best award courtesy of Ramon Osias. Her empire-cut pink pink Linda made of stretch satin with a draped neckline and keyed silk detail was very becoming. She should lose the pendro and wear a well-researched tiara from now on.

That a confession of a designer like Raphaella to come up with a resin.

In lieu of chiffon and jersey, ruched satin that make up Marivel Lizon's dress, he fashioned a pair of butterfly sleeves made of tatted brocade. As the white number needed no further dcluse, he merely sprinkled the back and upper bodice with hints of brown-ish crystals.

Formidable mese

Carmen, who once made headlines in Hollywood for dressing Shawn Bruno, has another formidable mese in the red and daring Diesse.

He proved himself up to the task by making stylized duchess satin asymmetric a maxi-mi pounds draped over a long sleeved lace blouse and black skirt with a folded silhouette. An old rule kept the tailor look together.

A lesser are would have laid an egg in such an outfit. With help from Eric Mesinque, Diesse was in full Lavilla mode conservatively made so she gamely agreed to dress her hair and hair and makeup to achieve a more fleshy look per Carmi's discretion.

Glamour and elegance were for Pearl Lredod to the Fil. Am Hlton, Antonio de Tomas—both in a Ramon Ramos—and Jesse Jimenez in a Pitoy-stitch Pearl's also looked smashing.

In a crowded field of misses, it was refreshing to see Jen in a Winfin-inspired strapless number fashioned from draped black crepe and chiffon. Ramon had a step

AIVA Mesa's Modus esque

TOO much, too soon for Karylle, with Ely ping Osmeña

of tonight—a fabric indigenous to the South—headed to add some show-biz sparkle as well as to highlight the sexy star's assets.

Around, as a strapless resin number made of shot lace, looked elegant as ladies her now role as a politician's wife. The gown was anything but boring as Ramon combined a fitted corseted top with a beaded column. A rendezvous mole gave the look an air of sophistication.

Joyce was supposed to slip into another designer's gown, but for some reason her managers reportedly went it back and opted for Pendro's. The decision paid off as the petite bombshell looked dynamite and fabu in the designer's pastelled Mikaeli-ish dress.

Pendro reduced the sleeves' size and kept the embellishment consisting of beaded tops, seed-jet feathers and Swarovski crystals to a minimum. The crescent-sporty styling lent a touch of nostalgia to the look.

Marivel Soriano in Jesse Sawa and Andy Ann Jessica in Paul Cabral didn't look to bad tonight...

In keeping with her nature as the "Diamond Star," Marivel looked dazzled without appearing dowdy in Jessica Isaacson pink chiffon dress with a duchess satin detail on the neckline. The look was decidedly young as she wore her hair down and stuck to a pair of classy dangling earrings. For some reason, however, the total effect lacked sparkle. It didn't help that Marivel's bubbly shyness, one of the hallmarks of a good term, dropped in the night were on.

Too radical

Cabral is now a certified master in the fine art of combination and craftsmanship, and this was evident in Judy Ann's chiffon dress, a pumpkin gown accented with Swarovski crystals and dot Salmanesque satin strips, two appliqués, horsehair and stitch frailties on the chest.

Everything about it was perfect, except for one touch. The sun-tailed butterfly sleeve was a wee bit too radical for Judy Ann to pull off. It gave her the illusion of broader shoulders, which is probably the last thing she wanted to achieve. Besides, the purse as an accessory that butterfly sleeves went out in years.

The night also had its share of bad gowns "happening" on good ittte-tated designer's.

Karylle Tordesil was enchained by Pepsy Ramos's black-and-white-ness, which had a number of interesting details on the sleeves. Those polka dots, however, were simply too much for the young singer.

The usually confident Kylie Dizon seemed strangely ill at ease in Jhanee Cline's wine red silk resin, which had a plunging neckline and uneven hem. Perhaps, a model would have created the draped, empire-cut number well, but not Stylista, who chose to wear it fashionably.

And what are we to make of the earthy resin by Jean Garcia (in an ideal Bernardo and Angel Garcia? Had there been a Ramon Ramos by Fashion Barrows, the two would have tied for worst dressed.

Perhaps not even Monica, the evening's acknowledged high priestess of bad taste, stood a chance.

It's a good thing Angel, in a well, washed-out and shapeless three-piece pins number in fox an ideal boy or young enough to carry it such a fashion feat pas. But Jean should have known better.

With all the dangling appliqués and range of fabric vying for every available space, the TV villain's name had the perfect name to look written all over it. And for someone who isn't exactly blessed with the best legs in the business, why did she have to have them?

Oh well. Ate Jean's fashion victims can take comfort in the fact that unlike the Oscars, the Gmf won't broadcast worldwide. Jean and Melissa Rivers would have had a field day.

ALTAIR BOY'Jean for Angel Locsin

REGINE Velasquez's Ramon Osias creation

JEAN Garcia's fashion faux

SEXY Vina Morales goes dupedoes

MYLENE Dizon's draped disgrace

BELLY DANCING classmates Ana Encarnacion and Susan Jones

SEXY Ray Montero with Audrey Miles' cousin, Rachel

ELEGANT couple Lucille and Mark Lucido

REGAL producer Mother Lily and director Joel Lamangan

BEST Actress winner Maricel Soriano and Delta Reds

LEGIS Marichess and Monica Arevalo

ESSENCES' Toni Abad and Gil's Anton Hizon

LOVABLE couple Annabelle Rama and Eddie Gutierrez

HAUTE planner Albert Martinez and Pres Daughter Lali Arroyo

Doing a Joan Rivers at the Pinoy Oscars

Viewpoint C2

Pinay theme

Filipinianas was the theme for the ladies, which was executed by our talented local designers except for the arresting Gucci gowns of Regine Velasquez and the shoulder-stunner Melysse gown of Rea Valdez (who was here as guest to the ball, again!). The color palette of the gowns ranged from various shades of pink such to the sweet gowns of Pops Fernandez and Marjorie Waiden (who received the best physique award for "Magnifico") to white such as Gretchen Barretto wearing Ysma Soho; white and Amanda du Rond's elegant Jorge Ramos hues (sexy).

As Gretchen gracefully entered the red carpet with her cute daughter Dominique she's an instant, I noticed her big sparkling diamonds that adorned her collar. I guess you read from Gretchen's jewelry. But she had done that in the past at the wedding of Sofia so in fact I got intrigued. I was blown away with her statement that her dazzling frames Once-pair was designed especially for her. The woman is my new favorite Manson idol. Me next role after being a hot Filipina is a Princess Gretchen.

Another white gown winner was that worn by Joyce Jimenez. The gown was not really a standout (though it was well-tailored) but the figure was. Joyce told me she lost a total of 25 pounds and all through sweat and tears sweat. She looked smashing. And don't you, I may add. So all you single gorgeous men out there, get your act together.

All the stars were dazzled from the Worlds Philippine Wins to Japanese and BMW's Jesse Enrique Cars. As prince translated Angelli

EDGE Gretchen Arias has bagsfrom Stone Specialists, Inc.

PRETTY Monica Arevalo de Rosenfeld

BEAUTIFUL PAIR. Gretchen Barretto with daughter Dominique

RED carpet hostess Bea Almeda

on Amara (or was it Shaad Taylor?) stepped out of the loosest fishery van. I realized the only thing missing in the way of my amazing three carats was that. When I gather enough guts to visit Dr. Vicky Belo, I will surprise my beautiful Boston with exciting new ones.

Other perks were given to the celebrities like shades and pedicures but additionally Bulgari loaned the ladies multicolored rocks jewelry. Within a few yards were bodyguards just in case someone would snatch them from the ladies. The organizers were even able to arrange the top vans/cars to escort Bulgari-ous lies.

I actually skipped the fantastic grocery because my own backgrounds. I had been built tall and the rest of my accessories were giving me back pains. I ran out early for Gelato for an hour or two. Another early exit, other than Yan Yap, we dropped by the Ben Ambalay party of Ingrid Go's way where we blended with her fellow divas.

What a ball!

After watching the Wimbledon ladies' Championship match, Jessie and I headed for the Director's Guild's ball at the SMC Venue. Being a Tinker and Gil event, all-out white and glamour were expected. Oddly we dressed like the first line divided set-up into the door but only used the coral side. I mistakenly lined up in the diverse reception table until I was informed to be Otso-side.

After mingling with the distinguished Tuko Wear Limited Lot, I headed over to the more exciting show biz section. The larger than-life crowd on that side had more gossip and action. Rufa Mae Quinto was not instantly not present when I saw talking with Jolo, Eddie Gutierrez and Annabelle Rama. She would have been a counter even on the handyman.

At her Royal Highness' birthday party, joint with her daughter Lottie, the Black Witch Club was magically transformed into a sensational castle setting. The catered-lation alone was already an indication of the grandness of the party. Her table was bewildered with my oohs as I greeted an enamel.

Back to the main topic, aside from the Rufa-ya Gibo marvelous showers (unfortunately I couldn't join the US Intel tradesman-cum-lobster all-nighter) by Manila Philippine Plaza innovator chef Brian Sarwil, Estrella had lost hope for each guest. But that's gorgeous Toni Abad told me that she was had seven groceries. Jessie got a Barrette nail repair polish. He told her he would surely give it a try when he joins the "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" show.

What an evening it would have been with both worlds mingling with each other! I could almost imagine Bella Flores having a conversation with Pioneer Manning of WBC. Or Louie Pecaut seated to be seated with Eminent Herrera. Or I would compose a table with Albert Martinez and Christopher de Leon (And Mara Schiavo, too) all to myself. Next year, there should be a matching game by Tatler's Aaron Lee Diego between the two natives. Now that's entertainment!

E-mail me at supremo@philstar.com.ph

THE GUTIERREZ boys: Rosita "Chit" and twins Richard and Raymond

PROUD kids Miles m., Miriam and Alissa Martinez

FAP Awards Night at CCP

KISUMI de Rossi enjoying her board

CRISTINA Soliven, Joy Alduez and Tina Jacinto

SHANGRI-LA'S Jay Waxman, GM Juliana Lynch and Bulgari's Maria Battjhek

MCQUEEN with Isabel Rose Valdez with Aimee Mendoza, Mark Sarmiento and Archie Rodriguez

ANSWER TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD

RIGHT AND DEX: Avanteka Hotel's rooms are a striking fusion of traditional and contemporary designs. The clean, simple lines, grandiloquent and restful colors evoke tranquility and intimacy. A daybed for two (above, right) with cushions and wine table set against a glass window overlooking the vacationer-aware romantic revelry.

Two-of-a-kind honeymoon havens

Newlyweds looking for unique hideaways are invited to check out the charms of these resorts in Thailand

WALL-MOUNTED paper-depicting characters from some-movie Thai myth adds character to a far-hotel.

By Gibbs Cadiz

THE MONTHS of November to April are said to be the peak season in Phuket, when tourists by the hundreds of thousands from all over the world descend on the famous Thai holiday destination.

But even at this time, right in the middle of the rainy season, when Patong Beach's bright, white, coastline rumbles day and night with large waves and sudden downpours, the resort town is still chock with tourists jetting over for a shop, keeping the entertainment district running way beyond midnight.

Phuket is a large island of many beaches and other fine natural attractions, and it has well-developed tourism and hospitality industry to make it a top draw among holiday-seekers. Among newlyweds on their honeymoons, in particular, this destination is enticing for its rich, often romantic mix of local culture and top-of-the-line comfort facilities.

Small and exclusive

Take the Avanteka Hotel along the busier strip of Patong Beach. Compared to other five-star hotels in the area, it is decidedly small, with only 11 rooms. Its lobby is neither imposing nor air-conditioned.

But all things considered, Avanteka offers pleasures worlds away from the bland homogeneity of many resort hotels.

Here, the guest rooms are designed to take advantage of the dark beauty of teak wood, the clean, simple lines of Zen, and the exotic touches of ancient Thai culture to come up with a gracefully original look and ambience that provides peace and relaxation more than holiday cool.

Avanteka's rooms are airy, fluid creations meant to inspire intimacy. The bathtub is separated from the bedroom only by folding window-doors and shades. A corner of the room is given over to a raised Thai daybed for two, complete with tasteful cushions and a low table. Natural light streams in from the floor-to-ceiling windows, with a private balcony providing a commanding view of a sparkling Andaman Sea.

"The hotel is more popular with honeymooners and young couples," says Pongpaiboon "Pat" Dhanmeechai, Avanteka's 35-year-old managing director. "We're small and exclusive, so while Patong Beach is usually crowded and busy, we offer peace and privacy."

Avanteka's massage and spa room on the ground floor overlooks a cool blue pool. Only two guests at a time are accommodated. The five-star service extends to other amenities such as tour programs and traditional culinary offerings at the hotel's outdoor Issa Anaka restaurant.

Dhanmeechai is not shy to lay claim to the fact that Avanteka is the poshest boutique hotel in the area. Its deluxe rooms cost 6,790 baht (about P11,300) a night, while the one-bedroom suite, which has a separate spacious

TURN TO ELEVEN, 3

CLIFF-Au Hang Resort's two-room deluxe bedroom

RELAXING spa at the private boutique hotel in Patong Beach, Phuket

THE SUNFLOWER shower spout and the mini-tropical garden on the side, gift signatures touches of a standard Cliff Au Hang bungalow bath, are guaranteed to make you feel one with nature.

THE LIMESTONE cliffs of Krabi provide a picturesque backdrop.

AVANTEKA Hotel at night

THE PRIVATE balcony of a Grand Deluxe room at Avanteka Hotel offers a splendid view of Patong Beach.

STEPPING the hills beneath the mountain you of the Skies are the Hobbits and Gandalf.

THE SOLID Christ's and the Mother of Calvary Hills

THE SHALLOW waters of Pinacanauan River are a picture of tranquility.

Cagayan's *magic*

A fellowship was formed to discover that far side of the earth

Text by Phebe D. Sabate
Photos by Karl Sembrano

THE LONG and upsetting journey could not have been bearable if not for the wonders of Cagayan.

Just when someone was getting cranky and tired, a view of the grassy hills that reminded us of the Shire were the Hobbits unfolded before us. The hills served as an appetizer for a full meal of amazing scenery ahead of us.

In front of stunning Ignatz, we left Tuguegarao after a 12-hour ride. That was another three-hour trip. It was pitch dark and the almost deserted highway was dark down my spine.

The morning after we had the photographic rendezvous those many sheep, we were told that the much-awaited cruise to see Antonio Bench was not incredible to pass up. At 5 a.m. the sun had already embraced the part of Aparri.

Incredible indeed.

The crew of fishermen, young and old, getting lost in the excitable of the day's catch was an instant product. It was like a painting that came to life.

The session of Cagayan could very well be the envy of the other beaches in the country that had been abused in the name of progress. The waters of the Anti Bench led us to a place where everyone just wanted to linger around because of its still human magic of and dazzling beauty.

The group's resident singer and poet, James, threw a question that left me stumped. Should we promote places like this? Don't you feel guilty when people come to know this place and harm the beauty of it all at? Looking at the deep blue sea, he said:

Ang iba ng dyendad ay hindi lamang isang umaaraw
na nagdilaga ng kasambot at panagip.
Ang dagitan na tubig at pating dalampasigan
at mga bahay na nakatag
at mangingisdang bumag ng ikabuhay.
Mga lugar na eh a maraka
ng isang kalikasan na nagpapasa bang
ng pagmamahal ng ay pangalagaan.

And then he showed me a list per ple stuff on the point of his hand. What a trick! I joked, oh, he replied. But would save the world from extinction.

The best compliment Mandal got was the restaurant choking of the cruise ship.

The session had just started and we already had a bountiful of memorable photos to treasure coupled by the envy that found the night of us.

Vandalized caves

The next morning we gathered most patrons as we proceeded to the famous Callao Caves in Peñablanca. So much had been written about these caves in my curiosity was intense. I was captivated by the sight, but my heart fell when I saw the state of the caves.

The magnificent caves was slowly deteriorating. Plastic wrappers, pop bottles with names were scattered to the floor where Mass was celebrated years before.

Seeing the vandalism on the walls of the caves made my heart cry. Sorrow all I could ever say was, "So sad...so sad."

Still with a heavy heart, we pedaled our way to the stunning Pinacanauan River. My jaw dropped after seeing the shallow waters and the mountainous area that marked the river. Rhoda said properly express the stillness and tranquility I felt there.

Sir underneath this "island" where we were "blessed" with water from the side of the mountain. I felt like I was lost again. It renewed feeling of optimism about life and nature filled my heart.

Early morning on the last day was a must. At 6 a.m. we went to the Cadyan Hills surrounding the Iglesia Church.

Looking over the Cagayan Valley as the early morning sun was rising, I was filled with wonder. The life-sized statues, the green grass and the rosy misty church seemed like healing hands that soothed the soul. The lush greens and the perfect blue sky that kissed over them stirred hope that in spite of human neglect of the environment, Mother Nature would always restore herself.

No more words can ever describe those memories of Cagayan. More than just the admiration of how the hand of nature works, the bond with the people I avoided traffic. The laughter, the jokes, and the warm presence for capturing the moments are more than enough for me to keep this stay in my treasure of fleeting memory.

Cagayan is simply full of magic. Such last magic from once long as human know how to care for the only home they have.

MAGNIFICENT but fragile works of nature, the Callao Caves need rigorous protection so future generations can still marvel at their grandeur.

PICTURE PERFECT scene at Sandaomio Beach in Aparri, Cagayan.

STEPPING on Mantled Island is a mind-relaxing experience for cagayanons.

A CENTAMPS-OLD wishing well marks the entrance to Calvary Hills.

TravelBriefs

KLM offers special fares

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines launched recently its "Good Bye Books" special offer at P dropped to Manila-Kuala Lumpur route.

Passengers can get a round-trip ticket for P20,000. Special Kuala Lumpur package costs $866 for a three-day two-night stay and $989 for a four-day three-night stay to participating KL hotels. Travel must be completed by Oct. 31.

World Business Class passengers flying to Europe can enjoy a special round-trip rate of $2,300. Travel must be completed by Oct. 31. The offer covers over 53 European destinations including Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, London, Madrid, Vienna and Munich.

Starting May 1, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines will have nonstop flights from Manila to Europe. "The fastest way to Europe," using the route of the new Boeing 777. The flight departs Manila at 10:30 p.m. and arrives in Amsterdam at 5:30 a.m. the following day.

For more information contact your travel agent, or KLM Royal Dutch Airlines at 8167961/63. Visit www.klm.com.ph.

Off-season package

Enjoy Boracay's endless summer with a special off-season package until Aug. 31 and Oct. 28.

The Sun Village Between Resort's Fun Sun Summer '04 package is available for a jump of three for P1,470 per person for three days and two nights. Couples pay P2,000 per person, while those going to Boracay alone will pay only P1,600.

For a four-day, three-night stay, rates are per person is P2,200 (triple occupancy), P3,000 (double occupancy) or P3,400 (single occupancy). The package includes: standard room accommodation, breakfast (starting on the second day) and welcome drinks.

For round-trip land and boat transfers, an additional P500 will be charged per person if via Malay, and P500 if via Caticlan.

The Endless Summer '04 package also covers Deluxe and VIP rooms.

Call the Manila office at 811-1335 or 8927291, or the Boracay office at (036) 288-5345. You may also fax (632) 817-1189 or e-mail sales@fun-sun.com.

Somewhere different

Explore the island of Tablas in Mimaropa, Romblon, and visit Agkilat Beach Resort.

Pursuit by Go Discover and Glenda Shortland, Agkilat is at the southernmost tip of Tablas. It is 20 minutes away from Looc and 35 minutes away from Tablas Airport.

Seats Here in Romblon Monday and Thursdays. The promotional rate can be availed by you on IFP Virgin Mary (Monday and Friday) or MV Mary (the Queen (Wednesday) at 8885 Lines.

Visit http://goodtrips.com/agkilat-beach-resort or call (063)-6-6366700 and (063)-2-8889455.

Gift of virgin coconut oil for her landlady

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Tita Dulce

DEAR Tita Dulce,

When I was still a high school student in our home province, whenever my mother would cook chicken or vegetables with coconut milk, she would give me grated coconut to rub (all over) my body, not just my arms and legs. I really had smooth skin.

Now that I am a college sophomore here in Manila, I no longer do that being so busy with school and (part-time) work.

Recently, in a jeepney on my way to school, a young man sitting next to me was talking about "virgin coconut oil," and his friend beside him said his parents drank it every day and his mother, who used to have rough skin on her legs, is now proud of her smooth legs after rubbing them with the oil.

This is not really a problem but I hope you will share with me and (other) readers information on virgin coconut oil. My classmates refer to you as "encyclopedia." Where can we buy it (the virgin coconut oil)? The landlady of the boarding house where I stay has rough skin on her legs... I would like to buy her a bottle for her birthday next month.

At least, my legs are fine even if I no longer use grated coconut. I just watch my diet because I have been diagnosed to be diabetic (though the problem is still minor). I always remember what you have said in your column before—all things work for the good of those who love the Lord.

ROSIE

There are times I really have to concentrate and focus on the problem a letter-sender mentions, but your query about virgin coconut oil (VCO) made me remember the past like how, decades ago, one had to turn a lever on the telephone to ask the operator to call the person you want to talk to. Nowadays we have the call-waiting system, caller ID and the cell phone.

As for your query, you see, when you were in high school, your mom had to buy a coconut, have it peeled and grated before she could extract milk from it or give it to you. Now we have bottled virgin coconut oil, which not only makes our skin smooth, but also has healing powers, according to some people.

I have a copy of "The Healing Miracle of Virgin Coconut Oil" written by Bruce Fife, N.D. (naturopathic doctor). He mentions 19 things VCO can do. Since your problem is diabetes, the fifth item on his list will interest you: "Helps control diabetes."

I will not use much space quoting him, but here are a few other benefits of VCO he lists: reduces risk of arteriosclerosis (thickening of the arteries) and heart disease, provides immediate source of energy, promotes weight loss, helps prevent osteoporosis (brittle bones).

Here is why VCO makes your skin smooth, according to Dr. Fife:

"The surface of the skin consists of a layer of dead cells, and when they fall off, new cells take their place. As we age, this process slows down and dead cells tend to accumulate, giving the skin a rough flaky texture. Coconut oil aids in removing dead cells from the surface of the skin, making it smooth."

You will really give your landlady a good birthday gift. You can, of course, just tell her to rub her legs with grated coconut, but it will give her more problems like having to sweep the floor afterward. And she will have to wait longer for results.

I suggest you get in touch with Robert S. Sehwani, who sells virgin coconut oil and includes an informative brochure with every bottle. Call 8178192 or e-mail rimco@info.com.ph. The address is 18B Tampinco St., San Lorenzo Village, Makati. He delivers for free if you live nearby. There is a courier charge if you live far.

E-mail titadulce@netscape.net or send letters to P.O. Box 2353, Makati CPO 1263 Makati City, or PDI, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City

Gold rush in Metro Manila

SHOPWISE, which claims to be the leading hypermart in the Philippines, is unveiling its biggest promo for the year, "The Gold Rush."

The promo is supposed to reflect the store's aspirations and combines its previous promos, Wild Deals (2001 and 2002) and Lights, Camera, Auction (2003).

"But this one is more exciting because bigger prizes are at stake and, at the same time, more challenging because it (encourages) consumers to buy (for a chance) for bigger prizes," says Catherine Tantoco, Shopwise's vice president for marketing.

She believes that "promotions are an integral part of a pleasurable and exciting shopping experience. Rather than offer customers what they have been accustomed to, which is the ubiquitous raffle, Shopwise opted instead to challenge them with something different," says Tantoco.

NISSAN Urvan Escapade, gold category prize

The bigger the prize, the easier it is to persuade people to participate in a promo, even if they have to buy more units of a particular product to enter. In any promo, customers always go for value.

The "Gold Rush" promo is designed to give consumers the power to control the outcome and their chances of winning. They get to choose the prizes they want—depending on their budget and lifestyle. The promo aims to attract customers during the slow period from July to September.

The promo is divided into three categories. For the Gold category, customers get the chance to buy a Nissan Urvan or Nissan Frontier at a discount of 60 percent. Customers must make a minimum purchase of P3,000 plus P2,000 worth of participating supplier products to acquire one voucher that can win them the chance to buy the vehicle at the discounted rate.

The Silver category offers four Yamaha Krypton scooters, Ipod M3P players, three days/two nights trips for two to Singapore with hotel accommodation, Compaq laptop computers, tricycles, Hewlett-Packard desktop computers, JVC video cameras, and washer/dryers at 75-percent off to lucky shoppers.

Customers must make a minimum purchase of P2,000 plus P1,000 worth of participating supplier products to acquire one voucher that can win them the chance to buy the discounted products.

Shoppers can get an additional voucher if the receipt also includes P500 worth of general merchandise items (home, children's, fashion, electronics, etc.).

The Bronze category offers four JVC flat screen television sets, home theater combos, DVD players, mini components, Nokia cellular phones, HP air conditioners, six-burner gas ranges, Canon digital cameras, two-door refrigerators and Tungsten Palm Pilots at a 90-percent discount. Customers must make a minimum purchase of P500 worth of participating supplier products to acquire one voucher.

A bonus voucher will be given if the receipt includes P300 worth of general merchandise items.

The more vouchers customers get, the more chances they have to bid for the special prizes.

Shoppers will each get a "Gold Rush" ID to be used in claiming qualifying vouchers.

Promo period is July 16-Sept. 30. All entries must be in by Sept. 30. Winners will be announced on Oct. 15.

Shopwise has branches in Filinvest-Alabang, Pasong Tamo, Makati; Libis and Araneta Center, Cubao, QC.

CRICKETTE Tantoco, Shopwise VP for marketing (seated) and Shopwise marketing team: Em Eladia, Aggie Artadi, Ester de la Cruz, Archie Carrasco and Paul Arnaez